

**WHY I BELIEVE: JESUS WILL RETURN**  
**I Thessalonians 4:13:18**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. I BELIEVE GOD IS FATHER, ALMIGHTY, CREATOR**

1. ALMIGHTY CREATOR

- Evidence of—Biblical Record—Science—Nature
- Human—Logic—Conscience—Intuition

2. FATHER

- His Spirit enables us to call Him “Abba, Father”—**Gal 4**
- His Spirit bears witness to our Spirit—we are His children—**Rom 8**

**B. I BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD AND LORD**

1. ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

- Eternal—co-equal and co-creator with God the Father
- Poured out—as Son of Man

2. LORD

- Exalted above all—for His obedience—death on cross
- Restored Son of Man—to pre-incarnate glory of Son of God
- We acknowledge Him as Lord—key to salvation

3. IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE—HE HAS CHANGED ME

- **II Cor 5:17**—*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, his is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

**C. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON WAS VIRGIN-BORN**

1. IMPORTANCE

- Full humanity of Christ—born of woman
- Full deity of Christ—supernaturally conceived by God

2. CHRIST’S ETERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS—BASIS FOR REDEMPTION

- a. **Perfect** God-Man—inherently **sinless**—**infinite** divine sacrifice for all human sin
- b. Our Righteousness—comes from His perfect obedience—and eternal righteousness as Son
- c. Our Pardon—relies on this righteousness

**D. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON DIED FOR ME**

1. WHAT HIS DEATH DOES

- Defeats death
- Atones for sins
- Reconciles us to Father—saves us
- Demonstrates God’s love
- Assures us of victory

2. HOW I KNOW CHRIST DIED FOR ME

- *Only* to those being saved—the preaching of the cross is the *power* of God—**I Cor 1:18**

**E. I BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED**

1. EVIDENCE OF EMPTY TOMB

2. BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF RESURRECTION AND HIS APPEARANCES
3. WITNESS OF EARLY CHURCH
4. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF PROMISE OF RESURRECTION

**II Cor 4:14**—*Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.*

#### **F. I BELIEVE JESUS REIGNS WITH THE FATHER**

1. HIS POSITION IS SUPREME—SOVEREIGN
2. HE IS IN HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE—GLORIFIED AT THE FATHER’S SIDE
3. HE IS RULING OVER HIS KINGDOM
4. HE IS DOING HIS WORK THERE
  - Fulfilling His promise—preparing us a place
  - Interceding with the Father
  - Achieving final victory—working it out
  - Holding everything together
5. WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE ETERNALLY
  - He is Servant King
  - As His bond-servants, we share His kingdom
  - We follow Him: to reign—is to serve

#### **G. I BELIEVE JESUS WILL RETURN**

**From heaven He will come to judge the living and the dead**

### **II. BIBLICAL TEXT—I THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

**13** *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14* *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15* *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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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. 17* *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 we shall always be with the Lord. 18* *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

### **III. A MESSAGE OF COMFORT AND HOPE—PROMISE—AND WARNING**

#### **A. MESSAGE OF COMFORT AND HOPE—NOT GRIEF—verses 13-14**

1. DO NOT GRIEVE—FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED
2. DO NOT LOSE HOPE—FOR YOURSELVES—[LIKE OTHERS WHO ARE HOPELESS]

### 3. REASON = THE RESURRECTION

- Because we believe Jesus died and rose again
- We know—those who have died—are resting in Christ
- Hope implied—if we die beforehand—we *too* will be in Christ and return

## B. MESSAGE OF **PROMISE**—verses 13-14

1. FOR **BELIEVERS** [ONLY]—NOT ‘THE REST’ [WHO DON’T BELIEVE!]—verse 13

### 2. **BASIS** OF PROMISE = RESURRECTION

- Because dead believers have been raised—and are asleep in Christ
- God will bring them with Him—when Christ returns

## C. MESSAGE OF **WARNING**—verse 16

### 1. CHRIST’S RETURN ACCOMPANIED BY STARTLING SIGNALS

#### a. **Shout and Angelic Voice**

1. Literally ‘the shout of command’
2. This shout—probably *is* with the voice of the archangel
3. God’s Chief Herald
  - Announcing—the coming King
  - Commanding all attention—directed to Him

#### b. **Trumpet Blast**

1. OT Trumpet of God—caused fear/trembling before God Almighty
2. Often meant coming Divine Judgment

### 2. IMPLICATIONS

- a. Joyful Proclamation!—time of celebration
  - o The King is coming
- b. Warning!—time of dread
  - o The King is also Judge—riding to circuit court
  - o The Day of Judgment approaches!

## IV. MESSAGE OF ASSURANCE—YET NOT FULLY REVEALED

### A. **ASSURANCE**—WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE!

1. GOD WANTS US NOT TO BE ‘UNINFORMED’ ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS

- **What**—will happen
- **Who**—will accomplish it
- **Where**—it will happen
- **How**—it will happen
- **Why**—it will happen

2. **WHAT** WILL HAPPEN

- a. ‘**parousia**’—second ‘**coming**’ of the Lord—**verse 15**

*15 For his we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the **coming** of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

- b. Also promised in—**I Cor 15:22-23**

*22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His **coming**.*

- c. **Five promises** attached to it—here in **I Th 4**

3. **WHO** WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS

- a. **God**—who raised Jesus—will orchestrate this—**verse 14**
- b. The **Lord**—Christ the King—will be the focus

4. **WHERE** THE PAROUSIA WILL OCCUR

- a. Above—from heaven—above earth
- b. In **full view of everyone**—all attention will be focused on Him

5. **HOW** THE PAROUSIA WILL OCCUR

- a. **Unexpectedly**

1. As a **thief in the night**—**I Th 5:2**—**[II Pe 3:10—Rev 3:3]**

2. Ominous for some

o Jesus said—*Watch out that it will not come on you **like a trap***—**Lk 21:34**

- b. **Visibly—noticeably**

1. Heavens will declare His arrival

***Mk 13:24**—The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken*

2. Here—two loud warning sounds—**angelic shout**—**trumpet blast**

3. The trumpet will sound—also in **I Cor 15:51-52**

**51** *but we will all be changed* **52** *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*

c. **Instantly**—also in—I Cor 15:52

1. **Twinkling** of an eye—we will be changed
2. Not just quickly—but also **any moment!**
  - a. Jesus said—*the time has come, the kingdom of God is near*—**Mk 1: 15**
  - b. It has been ‘just a moment’ since Christ said this!
  - c. With God time is relative—a day is as 1000 years

**Ps 90:4**—*For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.*

**II Pe 3:8**—*with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*

d. **Eye-blink Illustration**

- One eye-blink = ¼ second
- 86,400 ‘eye-blinks’ in 24-hour day
  
- 14 billion years since creation
- What if each ‘creation day’ were 2 billion years
  
- Using this ratio—1 day = 86,400 blinks
- Each blink would be—over 16,000 years!

d. **Powerfully**

**Mk 13:26**—*They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory*

**Mk 14:62**—*Son of Man—sitting at right hand of Mighty One—coming on clouds*

6. **WHY** THE PAROUSIA WILL TAKE PLACE—THREE REASONS

- TO CONSUMMATE REDEMPTIVE HISTORY
- TO COLLECT HIS SAINTS
- TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

**B. BUT NOT FULLY REVEALED**—WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

1. **WHEN**—WE CANNOT PREDICT

- a. Nobody knows—Jesus told us

*Not the angels in heaven—not the Son of Man—only the Father knows*—**Mk 13:32**

- b. God’s intention—reserved for only His sovereign knowledge

Jesus warned—*it is not for you to know the times and seasons!*—**Acts 1:7**

2. OTHER **SPECIFIC DETAILS**—WE DO NOT KNOW

- How those in Christ can **come with Him**—*but* also **rise** first!
- Exact nature and timing of ‘millennium’ and the very ‘end’ of everything
- How the so-called ‘rapture’—[here]—fits into everything

3. **EXAMPLE—DIVINE JIGSAW PUZZLE—GOD WITHHOLDS SOME PIECES!**

4. IMPLICATIONS

- a. Don’ speculate—or try to predict the end
- b. Be wary of—those whose ‘systems’ have everything nailed down
- c. Don’t be anxious—and don’t obsess about ‘end times’

**III. FIVE PROMISES WE CAN CLAIM FROM THIS PASSAGE**

**A. THE LORD WILL RETURN—verse 16**

The Market place is empty  
No more traffic in the streets  
All the builders tools are silent  
No more time to harvest wheat  
Busy housewives cease their labors  
in the courtroom no debate  
Work on earth has been suspended  
As the King comes through the gate

The King is coming  
The King is coming  
I just heard the trumpet sounding  
And now his face I see  
The King is coming  
The King is coming  
Praise God He's coming for me

**B. GOD WILL BRING THOSE WHO REST IN JESUS—verse 14**

1. WE ARE **INDIVIDUALLY RESURRECTED**—IMMEDIATELY WHEN WE DIE

- a. The living will not precede the dead in Christ—**verse 15**
- b. Personal Resurrection
  - Each person—at death—raised ‘in his own order’—**I Cor 15:23**
- c. 144,000 already in heaven—**Rev 7 and 14**

2. GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM—THE SAINTS IN CHRIST

- Affirmed in **Jude 14**—Enoch prophesied
- *The Lord will come with 10,000s of saints to execute judgment upon everyone*

## C. THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST—verse 16

### 1. THREE RESURRECTIONS

- a. **Personal** Resurrection—individual believers upon death—I Cor 15:23
- b. **First General** Resurrection—of believers only—Rev 20:4-6
  - o Occurs at Christ’s second-coming
  - o Before Christ’s millennial reign—raised to reign with Him
  - o They will never die—will live eternally with God
- c. **Second General** Resurrection—of unbelievers only—Rev 20:13ff
  - o Not raised at Christ’s second-coming
  - o After Christ’s millennial reign
  - o Experience second death—will forever die—separated from God eternally

### 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ‘THE DEAD IN CHRIST TO RISE’?

#### a. Problem #1—chronology

- o How can each person be raised at death—and then be raised at the Parousia?

#### b. Two answers

##### 1. A-temporal view

- a. ‘First’—it does not mean at *this* time in history
- b. But they were *already* raised—first *before* the living are ‘caught up’

##### 2. Chronological view

- a. ‘First’—in order at time of Parousia
- b. Their *souls* were raised at death—but *bodies* remained behind
- c. At Parousia—their bodies will be raised—made new—and reunited with souls

##### 3. Neither view condones ‘soul sleep’

- o Those who died are alive—and resting ‘in Christ’—not asleep in tomb

#### c. Problem #2—number of resurrections

- o How can there be a personal (I Cor) and general resurrection (Rev 20)

##### 1. Answer #1

- o Souls resurrected first—then united with bodies—[answered above]

## 2. Answer #2

- o Revelation is not literally chronological
- o First Resurrection = includes those who already rose individually

### D. WE WILL BE CAUGHT UP—TO MEET THE LORD

#### 1. IS THIS ‘THE RAPTURE’?

- No mention of ‘rapture’ in Revelation
- Uncertainty and debate between millennialists where it fits

#### 2. WHAT IS CERTAIN

- a. We *will* meet the Lord—when He returns
- b. We *will* experience His full glory and presence!
- c. We *will* be transformed—though we don’t know *exactly* what this means!

**I Jn 3:2**—*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

### E. WE WILL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD

1. Change from Inaugurated Kingdom—to God’s eternal kingdom
2. We will serve and reign eternally—as His bondservants—**Rev 22:3,5**

## IV. WHY WILL JESUS RETURN?

### A. TO CONSUMMATE REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

#### 1. TO COMPLETE THE VICTORY

- a. Heralded by divine signs—shout, voice, trumpet—**v 16**
- b. End of the old order—all enemies will have been defeated

**I Cor 15:24-27**—*Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*

#### 2. TO USHER IN HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM

**I Th 4:17**—*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 we shall always be with the Lord***

#### 3. TO RE-CREATE THE NEW ORDER



**II Pe 3:10-13**—*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. . . . But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

**Rev 21:1**—*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. . . . and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*

## **B. TO COLLECT THE SAINTS**

**Mk 13:26-7**—*At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

## **C. TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD**

**II Tim 4:1**—*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, even by His appearing and His kingdom*

1. Judgment will not be about salvation
  - That has already been determined—on earth
  - Based on whether or not one believes in Christ
2. Each Believer
  - a. Will stand before the **bema**— judgment seat of God—and Christ
    - o **Illustration—Greek bema**
    - o **Dias—before judge—where prosecution and defense presented cases**
    - o **Platform—at Olympics—where awards were made for performance**
  - b. Will give an account of Himself to God—**Rom 14:10**
  - c. Will be ‘recompensed’ according to what he has or has not done—**II Cor 5:10**
  - d. We will be rewarded—or not—according to what survives ‘the fire’—**I Cor 3**
3. Each Non-believer
  - a. Will stand before the **Great White Throne**—**Rev 20:11-15**
  - b. Judged according to deeds—because they did *not* believe in Christ
  - c. Falling short—they will be condemned—and thrown into the ‘lake of fire’
  - d. Experience eternal second death—forever dying—separated from God

## **VI. APPLICATION**

### **A. BELIEVERS**

1. BE READY—EAGERLY EXPECTANT

- **Mt 13:37**—Jesus said—*What I say to you, I say to everyone—watch!*
- **Rev 20:22**—*Even so Lord, come!*

## 2. CONTINUE SERVING FAITHFULLY

- **Mt 24:46**—*Blessed is that servant whom his Master finds so doing when He comes.*
- **II Th 3:6ff**—Paul’s exhortation—be disciplined—keep working—until the Lord comes

## B. NON-BELIEVERS

**Mk 1:15**—*The time has come! The kingdom of God is near! Repent and believe the Good News!*

## VII. INVITATION

### MY JESUS I LOVE THEE

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;  
 For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
 My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;  
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me,  
 And purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree.  
 I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;  
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I’ll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,  
 And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;  
 And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,  
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

**In mansions of glory and endless delight,  
 I’ll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;  
 I’ll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;  
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.**