

1 Thessalonians 4: 13 - 18: But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

know your Bible

sleep Christians death

precede (go ahead)

I. The concerns of the Thessalonian believers for their loved ones, V13:

- A. Ignorant: A mystery which must be revealed, not a puzzle you're not smart enough to solve. Example: 1 Corinthians 15:51 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." Other mysteries in the NT:
 1. 1 Cor 2:7 (unsaved cannot understand the wisdom of God);
 2. Ephesians 5:32 (A husband faithfully loving his wife has always been a witness to the world of how Christ loves His church);
 3. Col 4:3 (salvation through Christ alone);
 4. 1 Tim 3:9 (church deacons must be doctrinally correct)

mystery in Bible is secret in God's hands

Paul reveals God's mystery

- B. Sleep (asleep): The physical death of a believer. Used by Jesus when referring to His friend Lazarus (John 11:11-14) and often used in the New Testament to refer to believers who had died. Other references to "sleep" meaning the death of a believer (both Old and New Testament people): Acts 13:36; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 Cor 15:6, 18, 51; 1 Thes 5:10; Acts 7:60; 2 Peter 3:4

Unbelievers have no hope in afterlife

- C. "Sorrow...as others which have no hope": The unsaved have no evidence of what happens after death. Most imagine good things for their loved ones and bad things for people who they consider evil (Hitler). God reveals this mystery to us in His word, and proved His promises by resurrecting Jesus from the dead. We know what happens because we know someone who has died and come back to life. God's promise shown with Jesus

II. The catching up (removal from the earth) of Christ's church, commonly called the "rapture", verses 14-17

Latin Rapture comes from Latin word English

Greek "snatched up"

- A. The threefold announcement V16: Shout, voice, trump (special blessing for deaf, first thing they hear)
- B. The resurrection of sleeping believers verses 14-15: Souls return with Jesus (note that it is Jesus who returns, but God who brings the sleeping with Him, further showing Christ to be God) to be reunited with resurrected bodies. See 1 Corinthians 15: 50 - 54
- C. The transformation of living believers V17 Leave death behind forever
- D. The meeting place V17 In the air, Jesus specifically not returns to earth at this time. This will happen later. First, rapture. Second, 7 years tribulation. Third, Jesus returns to earth (Rev 19)

III. The comfort of grieving family & friends: the purpose for this mystery V 13 & 18

Second Temple:
 - first built in 516 BC under Zerubbabel, Ezra, & Nehemiah
 - Herod rebuilt 2nd temple starting in 20 BC
 * Rebuilding still in process (46 years) in Jesus lifetime (Jn 2:20)
 x 46 years for rebuilding major portions of temple
 x finally completed in 63 AD (7 years before destruction)