

## ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

### Adult Bible Class: *"What Will the End of the World Be Like?"*

#### II. New Testament Passages

##### B. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Verse 51: "Listen" - **What is the effect of this word?** \_\_\_\_\_

"mystery" - In the Bible this word does not mean a riddle for us to solve by putting clues and evidence together. Instead, it describes what we only can know through God's special revelation.

"we" = believers "not all sleep" – some will not experience death and the grave

"all be changed" – There will be a transformation from our mortal, physical, and perishable bodies to our immortal, spiritual and imperishable bodies.

Verse 52: **"in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye" – What is Paul emphasizing?** \_\_\_\_\_

"at the last trumpet" – as Jesus first said in Matthew 24:31

"the dead will be raised imperishable" – To put the words "dead" and "imperishable" together is a seeming contradiction in terms, but it will be so through the One who has defeated death.

##### C. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

The Thessalonian Christians had a sense that Christ's return would be soon. As time went on and Christ did not appear, their faith was shaken. Were those of their congregation who had died in the meantime being punished for their sins (as with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5)? Even if this weren't the case, were those Christians going to miss out on the resurrection?

Verse 13: "Brothers" = fellow believers; "ignorant" ("agnostic") = uneducated, uninformed, clueless

**"fall asleep" = \_\_\_\_\_ Are we afraid of sleep?** \_\_\_\_\_

This is more than a euphemism. It is an explanation of what death is for Christians. It is rest for the body while the soul remains active and aware. We usually look forward to putting our heads on the pillow at night. Our English word "cemetery" comes from the Greek word of this verse and means "a place of sleep." Perhaps we can say that this part of our eternal life is like a dream come true.

"grieve" = \_\_\_\_\_ ; "like the rest of men who have no \_\_\_\_\_"

**What is the difference between grieving "like the rest of men" and mourning the loss of a Christian loved one?** \_\_\_\_\_

Pagan literature and inscriptions on tombs from that time period shows their horror over death. "For Christians death is no longer that adversary whom no person can resist, that tyrant who brings all worthwhile existence to a horribly final end. Death has been overcome by the risen Lord, and that has transformed the whole situation for those who are in Him" (Leon Morris, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, Eerdmans, 1991, page 136).

Verse 14: **Why are Christians different? "We \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_"**

Notice Paul says that “Jesus died” not that He fell asleep. What Jesus experienced was the full horror of a death that is the wages of sin, our sin, so that we do not have to die in that way.

**What else makes us different? “We \_\_\_\_\_ that God will bring with \_\_\_\_\_ those who have fallen \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.”** (again the use of sleep as an image of death for the Christian)

“The reason for the Christian certainty is the divine action in Christ’s death and resurrection. The Christian view of death is not the result of some speculative philosophical theory, but of God’s intervention to bring about man’s salvation; and because it is the divine action it allows of no doubts” (Leon Morris, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Eerdmans, 1983, page 85).

Verse 15: **What is Paul’s teaching based upon here? “according to the \_\_\_\_\_”**  
**Which “word” is this? \_\_\_\_\_**

There is no passage in the Gospels where Jesus said such a thing, so this is either a saying of Jesus that was passed on in the church orally (such as Acts 20:35) or it is a direct revelation of God to Paul.

*John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for all the books that would be written.*

“we who are still alive” – Did Paul think that he would be living when Christ returned or is he using the “royal” we where he includes himself with his readers even if he himself won’t be there?

There still will be people living when Christ returns. Among them will be Christian faithful who have endured the time of great persecution before His appearing (Matthew 24). There had developed a concern among the Thessalonian congregation that their fellow believers who were dying before the return of Christ would be forgotten about, left behind, when He did return. Again, Paul gives us the image of sleep to describe the death of a believer.

Verse 16: “For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven” – Jesus will not send a subordinate such as an angel to bring about the end of the world. This is a job for Him to do. Notice the cosmology, He comes “down from heaven.” The abode of the Triune God in all His glory is above us. This will not be a secret or quiet event. **What are the three noisy things announcing His arrival? \_\_\_\_\_**

The loud command is a word that has a ring of authority and a note of urgency. It was uttered in the thick of great excitement. It was used for the commands of a charioteer to his horses, of a hunter to his hounds, of a ship’s captain to his rowers, and of a military commander to his soldiers.

The only named archangel in the Bible is Michael. Paul has spoken of the trumpet announcing Christ’s return in 1 Corinthians 15:52.

**What then will happen? “the \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ first.”**

The Thessalonian Christians do not need to worry about their loved ones who had passed away. They will not be forgotten when Christ returns. “This is the fullest description of the Parousia (“appearing”) in the New Testament, and when we reflect on the little that is said here we are warned against being unduly dogmatic about what will then happen. Paul’s main point is that it is none other than the Lord Himself who will come” (Morris, page 87).