

JOHN 14:1-4
THE COMFORT OF CHRIST!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 14 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Here in John we are some twelve hours or so from the cross and Jesus is with His men in the upper room.

It is here that they are going to have Passover, the last Passover that Jesus would spend with His men in His earthly ministry.

And it is here that we see Judas called out by Jesus, that he was the betrayer, although the other men did not know who it was. In fact, they all thought that maybe it was one of them, they were that unsure.

And it is here at this Passover meal that Jesus institutes communion with His men.

So far not horrible things, not things that would cause you to lose sleep over, but we are not done. Yes, one of them was going to betray Jesus was tough, but it was going to get a lot tougher!

And in John 13:33 Jesus said, **“Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ So now I say to you.”**

Jesus is telling them, as He already told them, that He was going away and where He was going, they could not come. And what Jesus was speaking of with this departure was His death!

He told them that Peter would deny Him not once, not twice, but three times! And He told them that not only would Peter deny Him, but they all would!

Okay, that is not a great pep talk. That is not something that you would feel good about. Can you imagine what they were feeling at this point. That their Lord was going to die, that they were all going to deny Him!

Some would say that this was one of the worst motivational speeches ever! I disagree.

Why? Why do I feel that this was not a horrible motivational speech?

Because it is the truth and sometimes the truth is hard to hear, but we need to hear it.

Why do we need to hear the truth?

Because in hearing the truth it then helps us to make decisions in what we need to do, how we should handle this, and what can we expect.

I will give you this example.

When my father had colon cancer the cancer spread throughout his body, and very quickly. He had some radiation treatments because the cancer in his brain was so painful.

And one day the doctors told my family, not my dad, that there was nothing else that they could do. That led to a family meeting, and we sat around this table at the hospital and my mom and brothers were giving their input in what should be done.

Most of them wanted us not to tell my dad that the cancer he had was terminal, that he was not going to live. They wanted to keep it a secret. I understand where they were coming from, they did not want to upset him.

Now most of you know that I am a straight shooter, and I am not saying this in a cavalier way. But I told them that dad needs to know what is happening, what the outcome of this is and we can't hide it from him. He deserves to know. How can he even plan for what is going to happen if he doesn't know that this is terminal?

Everyone finally agreed that is what needed to be done, that we needed to tell him but no one wanted to do it.

So, being the oldest son, I went, with one of my brothers to let my dad know. Was it hard? It absolutely was hard. One of the hardest things I have ever done. But my dad appreciated it and then we made decisions about hospice.

You see, once he had the truth, then he could make plans for what needed to be done and that is what Jesus is doing here.

He is telling His men that He is going to die, that they will betray Him and if it ended there, I guess that would not be too good.

But Jesus does not end there. Praise God for that!

And really, that is what John chapter 14 is all about. It is Jesus comforting His men and us with the words that He is saying!

I shared this example in our Genesis study, but it shows that if we have the right focus, we don't need to fear, we don't need to worry, we can rest in Jesus.

We are told,

Robert Louis Stevenson tells of a storm that caught a vessel off a rocky coast and threatened to drive it and its passengers to destruction.

In the midst of the terror, one daring man, contrary to orders, went to the deck, made a dangerous passage to the pilot house and saw the steerman, at his post holding the wheel unwaveringly, and inch by inch, turning the ship out, once more, to sea.

The pilot saw the watcher and smiled.

Then, the daring passenger went below and gave out a note of cheer: ***“I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well.”***

- Robert Louis Stevenson

That is perfect and I think that is what Jesus is doing here in John chapter 14. In the midst of this coming storm, He is telling His men, ***“Don’t fear, I am with you, and I will see you through. I will give you everything you need to take away your fear and to help you overcome these things you will be facing in life!”***

And those words are for us as well! This is a powerful, powerful chapter of comfort and hope!

Dr. A. L. Gaebelin used to say that among his family treasures was a German Bible that went back many generations. He said one could open that Bible to some pages and it looked like it had just come off the press, but when opened to John 14, it was spotted, soiled, and worn from the tears of many generations.

John Watson, the great preacher, said that if someone in his flock was going through deep waters and was about to die, sometimes he would kneel down next to them and whisper, ***“In My Father’s house are many mansions,”*** and he said that three quarters of the way through the river, they would almost turn around and come back, and he would hear them repeating, ***“... Father’s house . . . many mansions. . . .”***

Henry Venn, a Puritan preacher, was dying and, his biography tells us, *“The prospect made him so high-spirited and jubilant that his doctor said that his joy at dying kept him alive a further fortnight.”*

We derive great comfort from the fact that Jesus is coming to take us to be with Him.

- R. Kent Hughes, John – That You May Believe, pp. 339-340

I have called our study this morning – ***THE COMFORT OF CHRIST!***

I don't know where you are at, what you are going through, but my prayer this morning and through John chapter 14, and really, John chapter 14 through chapter 17, is that you would see the comforting, the encouraging words that Jesus has for us. You see, He is not going to leave us alone, but He will send the comforter to us after He is gone, the Holy Spirit to help us through the storms of life! And in these chapters we see comfort and persecution spoken of!

In the verses we will be looking at this morning I have broken them down into four main points and they are as follows.

STAY FOCUSED MEN – JOHN 14:1

I MUST GO – JOHN 14:2-3a

I'LL BE BACK – JOHN 14:3b

FOLLOW ME – JOHN 14:4

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 14, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word, and we look at this topic – ***THE COMFORT OF CHRIST!***

JOHN 14**VERSE 1**

Just by what Jesus said here, I think it is very clear that their hearts were troubled, they were overwhelmed by what Jesus was telling them. Especially that He was going away or that He was going to die.

And then to tell them that not only would Peter deny Him three times, but all of them would deny Him. That had to hurt. They loved the Lord, they were doing the best they could and yet, these troubling words.

And that is why Jesus told them **“Let not your heart be troubled . . .”**

This was in some sense a command. Tenney expounds on this by telling us, *“The form of the imperative me tarassetho implies that they should ‘stop being troubled.’ ‘Set your heart at ease’ would be a good translation.”*

I guess that is easy to say but harder to do, to set our heart at ease. But the key is the focus, where we are to find our rest, where we will find stability for our lives, upon the Rock, Jesus Christ!

I like what Ray Stedman had to say about his verse. He wrote,

That verse could well be called a Manual for Stress Management, a remedy for anxious and troubled hearts. Here is where we find the answer to the question, *“How do you spell relief?”*

Notice that the verse comes right after Jesus' revelation to Peter that he is about to deny his Lord. This came as a shock to Peter. He did not believe he was capable of such a thing. Yet these words about troubled hearts are not addressed to him alone. The plural is used for "**your**" here: "Let not your hearts be troubled" includes all the disciples.

We can understand why they would be greatly troubled. They were aware of the mounting peril to Jesus, and that the priests and the rulers of the Jews were out to put him to death.

Also, they were no doubt ashamed of their own behavior at the Last Supper, arguing about who was the greatest till the Lord rebuked them by washing their feet, much to their shame and embarrassment.

Then they were uneasy when he declared that one of them was going to betray him. They were confused and puzzled by the sudden exodus of Judas from their midst.

Most of all, they were afraid of losing Jesus. They were troubled by his words that he was about to take his departure, that they would look for him but would see him no more. Anxious foreboding filled their minds. The cold clutch of fear gripped their hearts.

Since we are also disciples of Jesus, and can rightly include ourselves in words like this, we must ask ourselves, "***Is it wrong for Christians to be troubled like this? Are we expected never to succumb to moments of pressure, or to feel anxious and worried? Are we supposed to be cheerful and confident all the time?***"

Many Christians think this is what this verse means. But they forget that Jesus himself was not immune to this kind of reaction to pressure. Three times in the chapters before this John, using the same word on those occasions as he has here, records that Jesus was "***deeply troubled in spirit.***"

Thus, it is clear that we may expect to feel troubled at times. Christians are exposed to pressure and danger. We have the record of the epistles to confirm this. The apostles went through times of great peril, during which they feared and trembled.

Thus, it is not wrong for Christians to feel pressured and fearful. What this is teaching, and what our Lord means by, ***“Let not your hearts be troubled,”*** is that, while we cannot prevent stress, we can overcome it. This is where this passage has much rich meaning for us.

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So what is the solution to our hearts being troubled?

The solution to our hearts being troubled is to **“believe.”** And not just to believe but believe in God the Father and believe in Jesus. Continue believing is the idea!

One writer put it like this, ***“What signalizes Him, and separates Him from all other religious teachers, is not the clearness or the tenderness with which He reiterated the truths about the Father’s love, or about morality, and justice, and truth, and goodness; but the peculiarity of His call to the world is, ‘Believe in Me.’”*** (Maclaren)

And another way to put it, ***“One who seems a man asks all men to give Him precisely the same faith and confidence that they give to God.”*** (Meyer)

In other words, Jesus once again is making Himself equal with God the Father, that He is Almighty God!

And make no mistake about it, this is an active faith, it is just not that you believe something, but you believe in God, in Jesus and that belief leads to action on your part. It speaks of trust.

Think about it like this. You have this wonderful new car, and you believe with all your heart that it will take you home.

Is that a fact?

I guess so, that is why you bought the car, so you can drive it, and now, drive it home!

But if that is all you do, just believe the car will take you home, you will never get home.

What do I mean by that?

You must get into the car. You must start the engine; you must put it into drive and then you can drive home.

That is faith. It is not empty faith, but it is a faith that is lived out and that is what Jesus is calling His men to do.

They believe in God the Father, they believe in Jesus, now, with all that is coming down upon them, they need to live what they say they believe!

Where are you at this morning?

Is your heart troubled?

Listen to these words of Jesus once again, “**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**” John 14:1.

And this statement by Jesus is showing that He and the Father are One, that they are equal. Believe in both of them! Jesus is equal with the Father!

And I guess you can say that we need to be responsible for our hearts. God has done His part, and now it is up to us to believe.

You see, when we don't trust in Him is when we get anxious, our heart is troubled, it is stirred. When you begin to go down that path, believe in God, believe in Jesus, and rest in the Lord.

It is as Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**”

Think about that for a minute. If I am trusting in the Lord with all of my heart, then there is no room for my heart to be troubled over the situations that I am facing, that you are facing.

Why is that?

It is simple. My understanding of the situation is limited and thus, I need to trust the direction the Lord is leading no matter how difficult that may be.

In other words, “**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**” John 14:1.

I know, I have read that a few times already, but we need to understand that and apply that to our lives!

Think about all that we have seen over the last few years. All the turmoil with COVID and other communicable diseases. And if we are students of the Word of God, why are we surprised by this, God has warned us.

We see all kinds of confusion with the government, with elections, and yet, if we are students of the Word of God, why are we surprised by this, God has warned us.

We see the churches moving away from the Word of God, moving into apostasy and yet, why are we so troubled? If we are students of the Word of God, we should not be surprised because God has warned us.

And there are so many other things we face that can get us to be fearful, to be overwhelmed. From family situations to job situations, to relationship situations, and the list can go on, even health situations.

And what is the answer?

What is Jesus telling His men and us?

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

And please understand that I am not downplaying what you are going through, not at all.

What I am calling you to do, and what Jesus is calling His men to do is – ***STAY***

FOCUSED MEN!

When my children were young, they played a lot of soccer, and it was fun to watch these little kids play. The ball was like a bee to honey, they all went after it.

And I love to watch that child who, in the middle of the game, was distracted by a flower, or a plane flying overhead or whatever it could be, who knows! But they were not paying attention, they were not focused, and the ball and all the other players went right by him.

And I think that can happen to us when things become overwhelming to us. We get so focused on these things, and they can be very tough, that we lose sight of the Lord who is right there ready to bring that peace that surpasses all understanding to our lives. And our hearts are troubled!

Distractions keep us unfocused.

And think about this.

A simple definition of distraction is ***“something that turns your attention away from something you want to concentrate on.”***

And this is exactly what Satan wants for us. Satan loves distracted Christians. He doesn't care what that something is. He just wants to turn our attention away from the things of God.

We must remember that the enemy seeks ***“to kill, to steal, and to destroy”*** us (John 10:10).

. . . the reality is, all Satan has to do to accomplish his goal is distract us. And when he distracts us, we become disconnected from our Creator.

Of course, Satan wants to do everything in his power to make sure we don't trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior on the front end.

But once he's lost that battle, the next best thing he can do is make sure Christians get as distracted as possible.

The most distracted Christians are the most neutralized Christians. . . .

The only way we can make sure Christ is ultimate in our heart is to fill our mind with the things of heaven constantly.

So in an ever-distracted world, the way we stay spiritually focused is to set our minds on the things above.

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Isn't that what Jesus told His men and us, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**"

May we – ***STAY FOCUSED MEN AND WOMEN!***

Stay focused on the Lord and let Him guide us, comfort us, give us peace and bring stability to our lives in the storms we will face in life.

Now, as comforting as these words were to the disciples of Jesus, listen to what He says next. I have called these verses – ***I MUST GO!***

VERSES 2-3a

Remember that Jesus and His men, all except Judas who was not present, he had already departed to betray Jesus and these words are not for him, but they are gathered still in the upper room where they shared in the Passover meal.

For Judas, Jesus was not preparing him a place in heaven; he rejected the life that Jesus offered him.

But for all believers, Jesus is preparing for us a mansion, not a literal building to dwell in, but a new body.

Let me also say this. Some feel that this is speaking of a literal home that Jesus is preparing for us.

It is possible, but as you look at what the rest of the text is saying, I think He is speaking of a new body for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

And that will happen at the time of the Rapture of the Church.

And we will see that more in our next point, that this is a reference to the Rapture of the Church right here in the Gospel of John!

What happens when a Christian dies, or more accurately, as the Bible puts it, goes to sleep. Unbelievers die, believers go to sleep. So what happens to them?

Remember, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and thus, our spirit and soul go to be with the Lord at the time we die, and we are with the Lord awaiting our new bodies, which, like I have said, takes place at the time of the Rapture.

Paul put it this way when he said, **“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”** II Corinthians 5:1-8.

You see, now our spirit and our soul reside in this body, a tent, a temporary dwelling place, but one day, when this body goes back to the dust of the earth, our spirit and our soul will inhabit a mansion, a new body at the time of the Rapture!

Now we may miss what is going on here, the picture that Jesus is trying to paint for us. I think He is borrowing from the Jewish marriage traditions.

Keep in mind that the engagement was usually arranged by the father of the bride and groom, many times while they were still very young.

The Bible tells us, **“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”** Ephesians 1:4-6.

In other words, we have been promised to the Son by the Father from the foundation of the world!

Next, there is the betrothal period.

At this point the couple is considered married and their relationship can only be broken by a formal divorce. In fact, if the husband would die during the betrothal period the bride was considered a widow.

They have exchanged vows, but the marriage was not consummated, they did not live together yet.

We are betrothed to Christ as soon as we repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives.

Now, for the next year or so the groom would be preparing a place for his bride to live, and it was usually on his parent's property because that is where his inheritance and land would be. And this would be an addition to his parent's house.

Remember what Jesus said in John 14:1-3, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**"

Now, once the addition was completed, the groom did not have the right to go and get his bride.

That was reserved for the father, he had the authority to say when the bridal chamber was finished, and his son can go and get his bride.

Thus, he could not give her a date when he was coming because that was reserved for the father to set.

And when the father was ready, many times in the middle of the night, he would awaken his son and say, ***“Son, it is time. Go get your bride!”***

So the bride had to be ready, for her groom could come at any time to get his bride!

Again, I believe it is God the Father who tells God the Son, Jesus to go and get His Bride, the Church, and again, we call that the Rapture, which will take place prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period!

And yes, Jesus is telling His men that – ***I MUST GO!***

And if we stopped there, that Jesus is going and we did not know anything else, that would be very disheartening. There is no hope in just knowing that!

But Jesus does not stop there. He continues on and He is going to tell His men, yes, ***I MUST GO***, but then He tells them – ***I’LL BE BACK!***

VERSE 14:3b

Make no mistake about it, Jesus is coming back for His bride, the church, we call it the Rapture! He said that He is going to take us to be with Him, in Heaven. As we will see, at this time, the dead in Christ and all who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord together in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18, I Corinthians 15:51-58)

Right now, He is preparing a place for us, a mansion for our spirit and soul to dwell in. But don’t forget He is coming back for His Bride; the Church and He is awaiting the Father’s command to go and get His Bride!

Those words were given to encourage them, to give them hope of what is ahead for them. But today, in the twenty-first century, the number of Bible teachers, the number of Christians who have rejected the Rapture of the Church or distorted it to unbiblical conclusions, is growing.

And it is not just growing, but those who deny the Rapture are becoming hostile to those who do believe in it. It always amazes me how false teaching causes such confusion and yet, when you listen to what the Scriptures say, it is very clear.

Now if you deny the Rapture, what that does is it takes our hope away. What do I mean by that?

Remember what Paul said in Titus 2:13, “**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

Now some may say that this is referring to us dying and going to be with the Lord. But if we truly look at what Paul is saying, you can easily see that is not the point. He is talking about the return of Jesus Christ for His Bride, the Church. He is going to appear, and it gives us great hope when He does!

Why do we need hope?

Because of what is going to be happening and is happening in this world. This world is being prepared for the judgment of God and it has not started yet. But what we do see happening is the pre-labor pains before the true labor starts, or these are just the preparatory work for what is ahead in the Tribulation Period, which the Bride of Christ will not be here because the Lord knows how to judge the wicked and spare the righteous!

But listen to this survey from 2016 regarding what Pastors believe about the rapture, it is shocking to me. We are told,

Out of the 1,000 senior Protestant pastors surveyed, only a third (36 percent) believed in a pre-tribulation rapture where Christians disappear at the start of the apocalypse and those left behind suffer tribulation.

Thirty-six percent of pastors say the rapture is not literal, while almost 1 in 5 believe the rapture happens after the tribulation (18 percent).

- <https://bit.ly/3SOowUB>

And these are the people that are teaching their congregations regarding this subject, and I am sure that those numbers today are even higher who reject the Rapture of the church or a Pre-Tribulation Rapture!

Today, it seems that most people disdain the whole rapture idea; many Christians regard it as an out-of-date belief.

“Who really believes this anyway?” some ask. *“Why should I put my hope in something that no one believed until the nineteenth century? Why would anyone look for something that only recently appeared in the long history of the church?”*

The reason we place our hope in the Rapture is because it is what the Bible teaches and thus, why would I take that hope away? I won't and yet many are doing that very thing and they are doing it boldly.

Listen to how one person makes these bold claims about who believes in the rapture and when that false teaching, what he believes, got started. This is what he wrote back in 2021,

Catholics do not believe in the Rapture. It's not part of our eschatology, and it violates historic tradition on this matter.

For that matter, the Eastern Orthodox don't believe in the Rapture either, nor do the Coptic Christians, nor do non-Evangelical Protestants. In fact, the majority of Christians, throughout the world, do not believe in the Rapture.

The doctrine is almost 100% exclusive to Evangelical Christianity, which is dominant in North America, and most of the English-speaking world. Before I go any further, I probably ought to clarify what I mean by the term “Rapture.”

Basically, the Rapture is a concept that’s very popular in Evangelical Protestantism (Evangelicalism). It’s derived from the teachings of John Nelson Darby, an Anglican minister who went rogue in the early 1800s and became one of the founders of an Evangelical sect called the Plymouth Brethren.

The earliest recordings of the Rapture doctrine come from him. Prior to Darby, nobody had ever heard of the Rapture doctrine, and it was completely foreign to the writings of Christians prior to the nineteenth century.

One of his disciples, in his later years, was a young lawyer by the name of Cyrus I Scofield, who later published the *Scofield Reference Bible* in the early twentieth century.

Scofield included Darby’s Rapture notes in the margins of this publication. This Bible became extremely popular in Evangelical seminaries all over North America, mainly for its copious cross-references and notes.

That is how the Rapture doctrine went from the obscure teachings of a British minister, to the prevailing eschatology of Evangelical Christianity in North America and around the world.

- <https://bit.ly/3A2F826>

Is that true? That it was a man by the name of John Darby that brought this teaching into the limelight? That this was never taught in the church and it is not even in the Bible?

No, it is not, and I will show you that he can boldly say those things, but he is totally wrong. He has not done his homework.

What about it being just a North American teaching? Not true again. It is sad that so many people can promote their false teaching and get people to believe what they are saying is Gospel truth. It is not because what they are saying goes against what the Scriptures teach.

And since Jesus is speaking of the Rapture here in the Gospel of John, I think we need to understand what this is all about and when this all got started!

Let me share with you what Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 4:13-18, **“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. 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.”**

Did you notice that as Paul speaks of the Rapture of the church, he doesn't want us to be ignorant about this event, and yet, the church is truly ignorant about it.

Like I have said, some feel there is no such thing as the Rapture, others feel it is at the end of the Tribulation Period, some in the middle of that seven-year period of time or the 3½ year mark, others say it is just a little past the half-way mark! All kinds of confusion and, like Paul said, ignorance.

The church is removed before God begins to pour out His wrath and that happens prior Jesus opening the first of seven seal judgments in Revelation chapter 6. And if you look at Revelation chapter 4, John is caught up into heaven and it is a picture of the Rapture of the Church.

Jesus has just been speaking of the church in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and now the church is removed from the earth, and we don't see the church again until the Lord comes back with His bride in Revelation chapter 19!

In I Thessalonians 4:14, the word "**if**" does not indicate doubt or being unsure but because of the fact that the Lord rose from the dead He will bring with Him on that day those who have fallen asleep in Christ, it is our hope!

In John 14:19 Jesus said, "**. . . Because I live, you will live also.**"

But for the unbeliever there is no hope, he will have an eternity to think about the wrong decision he made and regret every moment as he is in the Lake of Fire while we rejoice with our Lord!

And Paul tells us that this was not his idea, but it came from the Lord and Paul establishes that fact up front, which is important for many even today as they deny the teaching of the Rapture of the church.

Also notice that Paul speaks of two groups of people who are involved in this event; those who are alive and those who have fallen asleep or have died in the Lord.

There might have been some concern with the Thessalonian believers that those who have gone to be with the Lord were going to miss out on something, but that is not the case. All Christians will participate in the Rapture.

Also, there is an order that Paul tells us about. The dead will rise first, and we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to be with the Lord! Very simple and clear.

And the way Paul wrote this he felt that it could happen in his day, the imminent return of Jesus Christ!

And we see that this is done with a shout of authority and as Jesus speaks forth, as the trumpet sounds, and like I have said, the dead in Christ will rise first, they will get their resurrected bodies, and we too will be caught up with them and get our resurrected bodies.

You see, Paul told us in I Corinthians chapter 15 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and thus, we must be changed.

Again, listen to what Jesus said in John 14:1-4 regarding these new bodies, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”**

You see, these bodies of flesh are like tents; they are temporary dwelling places for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

But the Lord has a permanent abode for our spirit and soul to dwell in made by Him. In fact, He calls it a mansion that will never fade away as compared with these tents that are fading away.

That is what they will receive, and we who are alive when the Lord returns, will receive!

Now here is where people get confused. Paul tells us that we will be **“caught up”** which comes from the Greek word HARPAZO, and that word means to take by force, to seize.

And the argument is that the word rapture is not in the Scriptures. That is true, the word “*rapture*” is not in the Bible, it was taken from the Latin Vulgate. The Latin word *RAPTURUS* is used for “caught up” and from that word we get our English word *RAPTURE* from.

And some will argue that this is not what this word means, but it has been altered to fit what we want it to say.

Please understand that this same Greek word is used for Phillip being caught up in Acts 8:39 and of Paul in II Corinthians 12:2. They were taken away, just as the church will be caught up or taken away when the Lord comes for His Bride!

Also, to make it say something else makes no sense because in I Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul is speaking of the Day of the Lord and how we are not appointed for that day and thus, we must be removed before that takes place. Let me explain it like this.

Before World War II started, Japan and Germany called their ambassadors home, they left America and went to their own home countries, why? Because war was about to break out and their countries wanted them to be home before war was declared!

So too with our Lord, before He declares war on this earth, before He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, He will call His ambassadors home, you and me!

Remember, this is not our home, for our citizenship is in Heaven and that is where we are called to go, to be with our Lord.

Now, if you don’t want to use the word “*rapture*” then call it the “*great snatch away!*” That is what the Greek word means but I like rapture better!

And where do we meet the Lord?

We meet Him in the air, and in His second coming we come with Him, and He comes back to the earth to set up His Kingdom and every eye will see Him. During the Rapture the world will not see Him, but they will see the effects of the Rapture as millions of Christians are caught up to be with the Lord!

There is a big difference between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Jesus Christ; they are not the same event!

Now some will argue that this idea of the rapture of the church is a new idea, brought about mainly by John Darby. They will tell you that this was not taught for some 1800 years!

Let me deal with this idea that this teaching about the Rapture did not take place for 1800 years or so, that there is no evidence prior to 1830 when John Nelson Darby introduced this doctrine. And let me say this, that idea of John Darby inventing this is fake news! Sorry, but it is. Let me show you what I mean.

We have an ancient manuscript from 373 A. D., it is from Ephraem the Syrian or a writing derived from his teaching and is called, Pseudo-Ephraem. Thus, this manuscript is dated from 373 A. D. to 627 A. D., but long before the 1800's of Darby's day!

This is what it said,

All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.

- Ephraem the Syrian
(AD 373 or Pseudo-Ephraem and early
seventh-century text based on Ephraem the Syrian)

Grant Jeffery writes,

While the text is attributed to Ephraem the Syrian (AD 373), his teaching was so popular in the early Byzantine church in Syria that numerous authors later wrote commentaries on his works and incorrectly attributed their later manuscripts to Ephraem the Syrian. These attributed works are designed as *pseudo* (false) if scholars are not totally convinced the books were actually written by the attributed authors. Some scholars have suggested that this text should be called Pseudo-Ephraem, while others conclude that Ephraem is the original author.

- The Popular Handbook on the Rapture, Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Ed Hindson, p. 107

Let's look at what this early church writing teaches because it lines up with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching.

First of all, we see that **ALL** believers will be gathered together **BEFORE** the Tribulation Period begins! Notice that this writing teaches that the Tribulation Period did not begin yet, before the end of the first century!

Where will we be **TAKEN!** It says that we will be gathered together to the **LORD!** And through this there is a clear **DISTINCTION** between those who are living in sin in the Tribulation Period and those who have had their sins forgiven in Christ and are with the Lord!

So, to say that Darby invented this teaching in the 1800's is foolishness, it is not true, it is fake news to support the claim that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was not taught in the church, it was!

We also have this ancient writing known as The Shepherd of Hermas (140 A. D.) and it seems to be speaking of a possible pretribulation concept of escaping the tribulation. It reads,

“You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly.”

I think it is important for us to understand that the early church did speak of the Rapture before the Tribulation period and the Lord’s return was eminent or it can happen at any time.

Now just because the early church taught it or believed it does not make it right. What makes it right is because that is what the Scriptures are saying, that is what the Scriptures are teaching!

Now let me show you why I believe the Scriptures teach the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

Keep in mind that in I Thessalonians 4:18 Paul says that we are to comfort each other with these words, with this hope of the Lord coming to take us home. What hope is there if we are to go through the Tribulation Period? There is no hope and thus no comfort if that were true, but we are not going through this time of trial for earth dwellers!

I know, some say it is escapism and Jesus did say that in this world we will have tribulation.

Here’s the thing. Right now, Satan and his forces are persecuting Christians all over the world.

But in the Tribulation Period it is God's wrath being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

In I Thessalonians 5:9 Paul makes this powerful point, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For God has not appointed us to [incur His] wrath [He did not select us to condemn us], but [that we might] obtain [His] salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah).”**

I think that is very clear!

Also, in Revelation 3:10, Jesus' letter to the church in Philadelphia, the faithful church, said, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

That word, **“from”** is the Greek word EK and it means *“out of.”*

In other words, this trial that is coming upon the earth dwellers, not Christians for our citizenship is in heaven, has a definite period of time, and here it is spoken of as the, **“... hour of trial ...”** which speaks of the last 7-year period known as the Tribulation Period or the 70th week of Daniel.

God will keep us **“out of”** this period of time for God does not appoint us to wrath, but to salvation!

Is the Rapture an event that we should be looking for? You bet it is! We are looking for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and it should bring us great comfort in a world that is a mess!

Remember what Jesus was telling his men here in John chapter 14 – ***I’LL BE BACK!*** He was giving them hope, trying to comfort their troubled hearts and I think that is what the Lord is doing here for us.

And I like how this all concludes, as Jesus tells them and us to – ***FOLLOW HIM!***

VERSE 4

As you read this, please understand that the entire focus of heaven is being with Jesus! Yes, there are many other things to see but make no mistake about it, heaven is heaven because Jesus is there. And that is what Jesus is telling these men.

Again, listen to what Jesus said in John 14:4, “**And where I go you know, and the way you know.**”

In other words, they had all the information, they just needed to put it all together.

We will dig more into this next time because here is another hot issue. Is Jesus the only way to heaven?

That is important and of course the answer is that He is the only way to God the Father, to heaven. Apart from Him you will be eternally separated from Him!

And I have to touch on that, I don’t want to keep anyone guessing on this one. And to make this really simple, listen to what Jesus said in John 14:6, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**”

That is clear. That is easy to understand. The problem comes when people just don’t want to believe it, just like with the Rapture of the church. I am not sure how you can deny any of these points that Jesus is making, unless you don’t want to see them! And that is the problem. Not that the information is not there, but they just don’t like it and reject it!

Let me sum up what we have been looking at this morning.

Think about what Jesus is saying to His men.

“Men, it may look like your world is falling apart and all is lost, and the darkness is going to engulf you. But don’t let your heart be troubled! Don’t be overwhelmed by all these things! **STAY FOCUSED MEN!** Stay focused upon Me, keep your eyes upon Me! And please understand, **I MUST GO!** I have to finish the work that I was sent to do. But, again, don’t lose heart. **I’LL BE BACK!** I am coming back for you, and I will meet you in the air and take you to be with me and we will never be separated again! So men, **FOLLOW ME!**”

And I will leave you with this, these words of Jesus to His men and to us - **THE COMFORT OF CHRIST – DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED, YOU BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME!**