"FAMILY REUNION"

(A Meeting in the Sky)
I Thessalonians 4:13-18
1-21-2026



The reunion we look forward to should change our outlook on life and death!
4 Reasons:

I. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
CHEERFUL HOPE (v. 13)
(There will be no tears of sorrow)

II. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
CERTAIN HOPE (v. 14)
(It comes with a guarantee)

III. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
COMMON HOPE (v. 15-17)
(The whole family is invited)

A. IT'S A SPECIAL REUNION

1. For Honored Participants (those who have died)
2. For Family Only ("In Christ")

B. IT'S A PERSONAL REUNION
("The Lord Himself . . . meet the Lord . . . with the Lord")

C. IT'S A POWERFUL REUNION

1. "Shout"
2. "Voice . . . Trump"
3. Snatched up

D. IT'S A PERMANENT REUNION
("So shall we ever be with the Lord")

IV. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
COMFORTING HOPE (v. 18)
(It's something to talk about)

A. PERSONAL ENCOURAGEMENT ("comfort")
B. MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT ("one another")
C. SPECIFIC ENCOURAGEMENT ("with these words")

"FAMILY REUNION"

(A Meeting in the Sky)
I Thessalonians 4:13-18
1-21-2026



The reunion we look forward to should change our outlook on life and death!
4 Reasons:

I. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
_____ **HOPE (v. 13)**
(There will be no _____ of sorrow)

II. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
_____ **HOPE (v. 14)**
(It comes with a _____)

III. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
_____ **HOPE (v. 15-17)**
(The _____ is invited)

A. IT'S A _____ REUNION

1. For Honored Participants (those who have died)
2. For Family Only ("In Christ")

B. IT'S A _____ REUNION
("The Lord Himself . . . meet the Lord . . . with the Lord")

C. IT'S A _____ REUNION

1. "Shout"
2. "Voice . . . Trump"
3. Snatched up

D. IT'S A _____ REUNION
("So shall we ever be with the Lord")

IV. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
_____ **HOPE (v. 18)**
(It's something to talk about)

A. _____ ENCOURAGEMENT ("comfort")
B. _____ ENCOURAGEMENT ("one another")
C. _____ ENCOURAGEMENT ("with these words")

"FAMILY REUNION"

(A Meeting in the Sky)
I Thessalonians 4:13-18
1-21-2026

INTRODUCTION:

ILLUS: Family & High School reunions. No doubt a sad time to hear what happened to some. And a glad time to see how others are doing. You go to them with mixed emotions.

Today we will learn about a reunion that will bring with it no sorrow, no regrets, no mixed emotions.

ILLUS: Song - "There's going to be a meeting in the air . . ."

The fact of our meeting in the air, our reunion in the skies, should have an impact on your life here and now!

PROPOSITION: **The reunion we look forward to should change our outlook on life and death!**

4 Reasons:

I. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
CHEERFUL HOPE (v. 13)
(There will be no tears of sorrow)

V. 13

Paul by saying negatively, "I do not want you to be ignorant" is saying positively, "I want you to know!"

Teaching on the end times was important to Paul. He didn't view eschatalogy as a subject to be avoided.

Paul knew that ignorance concerning any spiritual reality (esp. resurrection of the dead) would be bad for believers (Hiebert, p. 188).

"Asleep" = a euphemism (softer term) describing one who is dead. When you are dead, you have the appearance of sleep.

We use terms to soften the idea of death. Rather than saying, "_____ died" we say "_____" passed away" or "____" went home."

When we bring a cat or dog to the vetinarian, we don't say: "We had our dog/cat killed"; we say: "We had the animal `put to sleep'."

Deut. 31:16a - "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers"
EX: In Old Testament:
"David slept with his fathers" (I Ki. 2:10)
Solomon - I Ki. 11:43
Hezekiah - II Chron. 32:33

In the N.T., this term "sleep" is <u>never</u> used of an unbeliever in death. Only believers.

It is qualified in Verse 14 - "those who sleep in Jesus"

I Cor. 15:15 - "We shall not all sleep..."

EX: Lazarus (Jn. 11:11)
Young Damsel (Lk. 8:52)
Those who arose after Christ's resurrection (Mt. 27:51-53)

Jesus is the "first fruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20)

The word "sleep" indicates 1) the <u>restful</u> effect of death for the child of God (for "to be absent from the body = present with the Lord" - II Cor. 5:8) [NOTE: it does not hint at "soul sleep"]; and 2) it also shows the <u>temporary</u> nature of death (Hiebert, p. 188)

To "sorrow not" -

1) Does not prohibit all sorrow (grief - even Jesus wept Jn. 1:1), but our sorrow is not like the unsaved.

2) Does not mean we won't miss certain saints who move on (graduate) to heaven before us.

Why might the Thess. believers have had sorrow for those who died?

Implications from context:

1. They may have thought that they who died would miss out on our happy reunion in the clouds with Christ.

2. They may have thought that throughout eternity those who died "in Christ" would in some way get the "raw end of the stick" (i.e. that they would be inferior in some way for having not survived until the end)

`

3. They may have thought that they would have to wait until the Millennial Kingdom was over to be resurrected and miss out on reigning with Christ. (Rev. 20:4) Context indicates that the Thess. Problem was not with the <u>fact</u> of the resurrection of the dead. Their problem was that of <u>timing</u>. They wanted to know <u>when!</u>

The pagans such as Sadducees and other philosophers of the day did not have any hope.

Aeschylus in unbelief said: "of a man once dead there is no resurrection."

Theocritus blindly said, "Hopes are among the living; the dead are without hope."

Catullus lamented: "Suns may set and rise again, but we, when once our brief light goes down, must sleep an endless night."

And Lucretius uttered these hopeless words: "No one awakes and arises who has once been overtaken by the chilling end of life."

On a sepulchre found in Thessalonica was this inscription: "After death there is no revival, after the grave no meeting of those who have loved each other on earth." (Hiebert, p. 191)

The world has no hope! Nothing to cling to! Nothing to look forward to!

And by the way, our hope won't disappoint us. We are not clinging to a false sense of needed security. Like the agnostics say.

--What we do have is a hope (confidence) that we will see them again.

--What we do have is a comfort (encouragement) (v. 18) that death does not end it all. (As a matter of fact, it is only the beginning!)

We have a cheerful hope!

II. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
CERTAIN HOPE (v. 14)
(It comes with a guarantee)

The word "if" in the greek is a condition of reality or certainty (first class); therefore, it has the idea of "since"

NOTE: It says "Jesus died" (no euphemism to soften his death), yet believers "sleep." Never is the word "sleep" used of Christ's death! Why? He faced the full impact of death as our Sin-bearer. His death brought about the death of death (I Cor. 15:56, 57). Jesus transformed death for believers into sleep that awaits a future awakening (Hiebert, p. 192).
"Sleep in Jesus" = "in" = which literally means "through" or "by means of"

God is teaching us this: Death for the believer is turned into mere sleep through the atoning work of Jesus.

By Jesus' death and resurrection, He disarmed death and removed its sting from those in Him (See Hiebert, p. 194).

It is by means of Jesus that our victory over the grave is guaranteed. Because of what Christ did, we can take comfort; our resurrection is guaranteed because of His.

Why? We are in Him! One with him!

--He is the Head. WE are the body.
The body goes where the Head goes!
--He is the Groom; we are the bride
The bride goes where the Groom goes!

We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh (Eph. 5:30). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:15)

We are so much one that what He has is ours; what He has done, it's as if we also have done it.
His death for sin was our death to sin (Ro. 6)
His resurrection from the grave was our res. from the grave.
His life is our life. "When Christ who is our life shall appear"
His riches are our riches (Eph. 1:3ff)

The point of the verse is this: When Jesus comes back, the souls of the saints who have previously died, also come with Him because they are also one with Him!

"No longer must the mourners weep
And call departed Christians dead;
For death is hallowed into sleep,
And every grave becomes a bed.
Now once more, Eden's door
Opens stands to mortal eyes!
Now at last, old things past,
Christ is risen! We too shall rise!"
(Hiebert, p. 192)

III. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
COMMON HOPE (v. 15-17)
(The whole family is invited)

A. IT'S A SPECIAL REUNION

V. 15

"By the word of the Lord" = shows that the Lord spoke these words to Paul (new revelation)

What Paul received to give them was a "mystery" (I Cor. 15:51-54) - i.e. something previously unknown.

The mystery is not the fact of a resurrection (the O.T. saints knew about this). The mystery is that "we shall all" (living and dead) be raptured and changed at the same time.

Paul anticipated Christ to return in His day. He says in first person plural, "We which are alive..."

Paul lived in anticipation of Christ's return.

He knew it was imminent! The time of it, he did not know (cf. Acts 1:7; Mt. 24:36).

But he was still "looking." (Titus 2:11-13).

1. For Honored Participants (those who have died)

"Shall not prevent" = not = - a double negative which means we will in no way go before or precede them.

Paul is saying: "Don't feel sorry for the dead in Christ; they are going up before us who are alive and remain." They even get a "head start!"

"Age before beauty"; "respect for elders".

2. For Family Only ("In Christ")

V. 16

The phrase "in Christ" is used exclusively of Church Age saints.

We will not be here when God pours out His wrath on the earth!

"Shout" = no doubt Jesus will have to qualify who He calls to come up. Because if He merely said, "Come up here" all in the graves (believers and unbelievers) would alike rise!

This invitation is not for all! It's only for family!

B. IT'S A PERSONAL REUNION
("The Lord Himself . . . meet the Lord . . . with the Lord")

The Lord Himself - the word "Himself" is emphatic. The Lord will not send a substitute to come for His bride - He will come Himself! In Person!

"The Lord Himself" - Jesus will rise off of the throne He is seated on (Ro. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1) and will personally come down.

Note: The word “Himself” is the Greek word Autos (which means “the Same”) and NOT the word “Monos” (which means “alone”). This word “autos” allows for Christ to come with His Angels and even utilize Angels in the rescue of His people at the Rapture (Matthew 24:30-31). The word “Himself” here does NOT mean “the Lord ALONE shall descend from Heaven”

Acts 1:11 - "This same Jesus ... shall so come"

V. 17

"To meet" = to get together for a meeting. The word had a technical meaning in Greek society to describe how a visiting dignitary would be met formally by citizens who had left their city to meet him. They then would ceremonially escort this important person back into the city (Best).

In our case, we will meet Christ; then He will escort us to His city.

The clouds will be as it were our "chariot" to carry us to heaven. (Lightfoot)

Jesus will come to bring his bride to where He is (Jn. 14:2-3)

In Heaven, we will experience the judgment seat of Christ (I Cor. 3; II Cor. 5). Then the marriage supper of the lamb (Rev. 19:7), followed by a return to earth for the final battle before the Millennium Kingdom (Rev. 19:11-16).

"Meeting" - see Mt. 25:6. Prepared virgins meet the bridegroom for the marriage (v. 10).

C. IT'S A POWERFUL REUNION

1."Shout"

V. 16

"Shout" = an authoritative loud order. The word was used to denote the cry made by the ship's master to its rowers (Ex: "Row! Row!") or by a military officer to his soldiers (EX: "Men! Stand up, gun on right shoulder, chin up, and march!"). or by a hunter to his hounds ("Come, boy!") or by a charioteer to his horses ("Go! "Giddy up!")

When used to military or naval personnel, it was a battle cry. In most places, it denotes a loud, authoritative cry, often one uttered in a time of great excitement (SEE Rienecker, p. 599).

The world will be busy; Christians will be busy, until that unexpected call comes: "Come up hither!" (EX: Rev. 4:1).

This "shout" comes from the lips of Christ.

Cp. Jn. 5:25 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

EX: Jn. 11:43 - Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"

2. "Voice . . . Trump"

Archangel = Jude 9 = Michael

The "voice" of the archangel refers to the "sound" of the trumpet.

God puts a conjuction (meaning "even") between the two phrases to show that the voice (sound) and the trumpet are the same (cp. Rev. 8:13 - "voices of the trumpet"; Rev. 10:7; Rev. 11:15)

Since this trumpet is called the "last trump" (In I Cor. 15:52), some view this as the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11:15. (However, there is no mention of a rapture in Rev. 11:15ff)

Others tie this trump to Mt. 24:31 (however, this verse is describing the angels regathering Israel to Jerusalem in fulfillment of Joel 3:1ff and Ezek. 37:1-14; cp. Mt. 13:30, 38-43).

"Trumpet" - used by Jews in their festivals

3.Snatched up

V. 17

"Caught up" = lit. to snatch up; to seize or carry off by force. to be raptured (a Latin word translating this word).

The word denotes the action of a swoop of a force which cannot be resisted (the verb is passive - God does the snatching of His children!)

The word "then" denotes the speedy following of what happened previous (Reinecker, p. 599).

Right "on the heels" of those who come blasting out of the graves, we will go up!

The words "together with them" are emphatic. Paul's point is this: They are not going up alone; we will be following right after (a matter of fractions of a second).

We are not looking for the undertaker - but the uppertaker!

D. IT'S A PERMANENT REUNION
("So shall we ever be with the Lord")

"And so" [in this (united) manner] shall we ever be with the Lord"

NOTE: Paul does not say "and there" as if the air were the permanent dwelling place. (Frame, cited in Hiebert, p. 203).

The important thing is not the place we will be in, but the One we will be with (Christ).

IV. The Reunion We Look Forward to is a:
<u>COMFORTING HOPE</u> (v. 18)
(It's something to talk about)

A. <u>PERSONAL</u> ENCOURAGEMENT ("comfort")

V. 18

"Comfort" = lit. to call alongside; to encourage. Like one who consoles, hugs, gives encouraging words to one sorrowing over the loss of a loved one.

What comforting words we can give: "_____ is in Heaven, but we will see him again!"

B. <u>MUTUAL</u> ENCOURAGEMENT ("one another")

C. <u>SPECIFIC</u> ENCOURAGEMENT ("with these words")

"With these words" = lit. <u>in</u> these words.

The point is this: Use these very words that I (Paul) gave you. (They are inspired words!)

CONCLUSION:

The Rapture is a comforting truth not only because we will be reunited with our spiritual family, but because we will not be here to experience the wrath of God!

Jesus comes for us like a thief int he night; then sudden destruction falls on the earth. Men will be saying, "Peace and safety" before Christ's return.

EX: Noah and the Flood Mt. 24:37-41 (cp. II Pet. 3:3-7)

EX: Lot and the destruction of Sodom (Lk.4 17:28-37).