

The next topic Paul takes up is a completely new revelation directly from the Lord. **By the word of the Lord!** It was something he apparently had not touched upon when with them. He is responding to a report brought to him by Timothy upon his return from his visit with them. We don't know how or when the Lord revealed this to him but here it is. Perhaps it was revealed to him as he considered their quandary over the death of the beloved fellow believers, some perhaps even from persecution. They clearly had grasped the fact that the Lord was returning and that it was near. Ch. 1:10; etc. But would they ever see their loved ones again? Would those that died now lose out on the promised glorious appearing and reign of the Lord? The Spirit uses this occasion to reveal a secret. He records for us all a wonderful surprise God had reserved for the Assembly. While this is a rather familiar passage to those of us who hear it at funerals of departed ones, many even in professing Christendom are unaware of it. There is also some serious discussion on the timing of this event among those who know of it and look for it. Paul speaks to that more in the Second Epistle. Here the emphasis is more upon the FACT, and the COMFORT these soft but glorious words bring to the heart of those bereaved of a loved one. However note that it is presented as the NEXT event to look forward to. No prophecies are cited here or anywhere else that have to be fulfilled before the Lord is "free" to return for His own in the air. The only thing "holding it up" is given by Peter, 2Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He has waited for many down through the centuries since the cross, waited for us, but soon will have completed His Assembly, the Bride for His Son, and then He will send Him for her. As He prepared Adam a bride, and brought her to him; as He chose Isaac a bride and brought her to him, He brings us together to His son for the Wedding. He reveals this to us here, in Ephesians 5, 1Corinthians 15, and refers to it in other New Testament scriptures as well. If we believe the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead then we can certainly believe this.

First, our loved ones who have died are said to sleep. To sleep in Jesus. Not a with a dead Jesus, for He is risen. Their bodies sleep until He is ready to raise them again, refreshed as from an afternoon nap. Meanwhile their souls are with Him, as we learn from a later epistle to another Macedonian assembly.

Philippians 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this

confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: {conversation...: or, we live or conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven, or, for obtaining heaven} 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

They are in Paradise with the Lord.

Luke 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Though temporarily separated from the body a believer's unseen being, soul and spirit, is not asleep. He is very much aware and alert in His presence. Note that even the lost are not unaware of where they are and recognize others while in hades, Luke 16:23. But they await being raised and judged by the Lord before the Great White Throne. The souls in Paradise long to be reunited with their bodies, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9. They look forward to continue their enjoyment of eternal life in the body (which joy began upon their being saved). Soon they will. Scripture is clear. We are told that God will bring them with Him at the glorious appearing of the King to reign. No doubt about that. Therefore He must retrieve and renew their bodies before that event. Here Paul tells us also they will rise before we who are alive at that point are taken up to meet Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. We with Him for whatever exploits or intimacies He is pleased to initiate are then ours with Him, forever. His co-regent over the earth just as Eve was to be for Adam.

He next assures us we will not go to heaven with out them. Nor they without us. They will rise from the dead first then we who are alive when He comes for us shall join them in the clouds on the way to meet Him in the air. This is not in outer space. Not on earth, for He has sanctified (separated) Himself from the world that crucified Him, John 17:____. We are to walk as a separated people **soon to lifted right out of here.** (As pilgrims and strangers aliens, 1Peter 2:11). When the Lord returns all the way to the ground it will be to judge the earth and take possession of it, Zechariah 14:4. When He ascended, forty days after His resurrection, He disappeared in the clouds, so we as His disciples look for Him again there. Perhaps cloudy days will not be quite so dismal if we think of His return in the clouds.

Note, He comes in person! No stand-ins for this event. The Bridegroom comes personally for His Bride. But he brings an honor guard with Him, the angels. The grandeur is shadowed in Song of Songs 3:6. The trumpet of God sounds. Blessed, glorious sound. A dreadful

trumpet sounded when the God gave the Law on Mount Sinai. But this trumpet is calling, not warning. Except it is a warning to the unseen hosts of the Prince of the power of the air, the god of this world, Satan, that **the saints are coming through!** The Lord is bodily removing His own from Satan's clutches, Satan's realm. No more suffering at the hands of Satan in his world. No more destruction of

the flesh at the hands of Satan, 1Corinthians 5:2. The saints evacuation of earth, made certain by the Lord's victory over death at the cross, gets underway. Temporarily there are no believers alive on earth, or dead in the earth or sea. But the Spirit cannot rest. There is work to do back on earth. We read of that next.

By Ron Canner, October 12, 2005.

391. Jesus, the Lord, will soon descend

C.M.P

Jesus, the Lord, will soon descend
With shout, with trump of God!
Ye saints, rejoice! His powerful voice
The graves shall instant rend,
While saints their voices blend
In notes of rapture, sweet and loud!

Come, mighty Shepherd of the sheep!
Come in Thy beauty! come!
To Thee convoke Thy waiting flock-
All saints who wake or sleep
Swift summon forth to keep
Love's glorious tryst beyond the tomb!

Death and the grave with Thee we'll tread,
In immortality!
Caught up in air, in cloud-ranks fair,
Transfigured quick and dead
Shall rise to Thee, their Head:
Death swallowed up in victory!

Wake, bride of Christ, in ecstasy,
Love's glad triumphant chord!
Soon, wondrous sight! all love and light,
The Bridegroom come for thee,
Shall take thee, bright as He,
To be forever with the Lord!

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