

waiting, longing, hoping & praying
for the Day of the Lord / **Study 3**

HOPING

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

BENEDICTION

by Bruce Prewer

Watch out! Be alert!

Christ comes when you least expect it.

*In the beggar on the street,
In the loved one at our table,
In the stranger in our pew,
In the refugee on our shores,
In the hour of birth.
In the hour of death.*

With judgement and mercy, Christ comes.
Watch out! Be alert!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
will
be with you now and always.

Amen!

COMMENTARY

primary source: UBS Handbooks for New Testament

v.13 *uninformed*: unaware; see Rom 1:13, 2 Cor 1:8.

v.13 *sleep in death*: see 1 Cor 15:18, 20.

v.13 *grieve*: sad, anxious, pained. **v.13** *hope*: both the expectation of a future event and a confident waiting for that event. **v.14** *believe*: see Rom 6:8.

v.15 *according to the Lord's word*: see Mark 13:5-37.

v.16 *loud command*: as common to sailors, hunters and jockeys. **v.16** *archangel*: 'chief angel' or 'ruling angel'.

v.16 *trumpet*: In the O.T. trumpets (shofars, rams' horns) were used to gather the assembly or give orders for battle; Roman armies also used trumpets in war.

v.16 *the dead in Christ*: those who have died believing in Christ. **v.16** *rise*: come back to life, live again.

v.17 *caught up*: violently caught or snatched away.

v.17 *in the clouds*: up where the clouds are. **v.17** *meet*: a solemn meeting, in no way casual or accidental.

v.18 *encourage*: comfort, console.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What caught your attention? Why?
2. Why is Paul writing this? What change does he hope to bring about?
3. Grieving the loss of a loved one is normal. How does our faith in Jesus help us when we grieve?
4. What is the basis for Paul's hope? Where do you find hope?
5. Read Mt 24:30-31 and discuss parallels with v.16.
6. Karoline Lewis writes:
'Hope is not simply a future wish, but one that lays claim on life now, that makes a difference for how life is lived and what is at stake.'
Discuss.
7. Paul's words are prompted by a pastoral situation, namely the sadness that took hold of the Thessalonians when fellow believers died and Jesus had not yet returned as expected. What sadness do we face in our time and circumstances, and how might thinking about Jesus' return be an encouragement to us?
8. **In Summary: What does this passage teach us about how we, as a community, encourage one another (v.18) and prepare for Jesus' return?**
9. What fresh perspective did you gain from this study? What do you want to explore further?