The Church is with the Lord pt. 2

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Date: 01 December 2024

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.! Find with me 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

1 Thessalonians 4. We're going to do, it's going to be somewhere between a sermon on this passage as well as maybe a bit also of a Bible study looking at some various passages to try to help explain what we're looking at.
And so this will be a little bit pulpit sermon, this will be a little bit maybe classroom lesson, a bit of exposition with a little bit of biblical theology along with that.
And just in full disclosure, we started this last Sunday night, and so if you weren't with us, it may help you to go back and listen to that online so you can have some of the foundational elements with that.
I've got about two messages worth to do tonight in this text, and so we'll just kind of see where we go. I'm not going to hold you hostage here, but we won't meet for a normal Sunday evening service for a month because of Christmas around the tree and then Christmas and New Year's.
[1:54] And so I'd like to get this done tonight. I'd also like to get you home in time to put your kids to bed. So we'll just see, we'll see how far we get.

I don't want to go back and rebuild the foundation from last week. Again, if you weren't here, that may help you, but we're just going to jump into where we are. 1 Thessalonians 4, 13 to 18.
I do want to say this as a reminder, though. There's a lot of reasons why at our church we preach verse by verse, what we would call sequential expositional preaching.
And one of the reasons is because texts are always in a context. 1 Thessalonians 4, 13 to 18 is not a paragraph that just exists by itself in a vacuum.
It's in the midst of a letter. And if you don't know the background of the letter, it's hard to rightly understand what's going on in this paragraph.
[2:59] That is not to say that a church who doesn't do sequential exposition doesn't love Jesus. That's not to say that they don't love his word, not by any means.

It is to say, though, why we are convinced this is the best way for a church to study the Bible. Because you don't want to come to a text and interpret it out of context.
This is a letter. If somebody wrote you a letter, you wouldn't just turn to page 3, paragraph 2 and read it and figure out what the letter is about and put the rest away.
You would read it in order. You would think through it in order. And so it's a hard thing if week after week you're just jumping text to text to text and picking something out.
Again, let me be very crystal clear here. There are plenty of wonderful churches who do it different than we do. This has nothing to do with any other church. Just letting you know another reason why, for us, we believe this is the best way to study and understand the Bible.
[4:06] Because you need to know what has happened in the first three and a half chapters to be able to rightly understand chapter 4. Now, for that matter, you also need to be able to understand what's happening in chapter 5 to be able to understand chapter 4.

So the context is extremely important. So do remember this, that Paul has taught this church about suffering, about affliction, and he's taught them about the return of Christ.
They are now experiencing persecution. So the question for them is, if they have been taught that they would experience affliction, but would be protected from the worst of it, what we would know as the tribulation, then what happens if they are wrongly told that they are in the tribulation?
So, last week we looked at what we see in later writings of Paul to the church at Thessalonica, where they had received a forged letter.

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And basically what's happening is, this forged letter is telling them, you're in the tribulation. If they've been told the church would be taken out before the tribulation, and now they are told they're in the tribulation, then one of two things has happened.
[5:34] Either they're not really believers, and that's why they weren't lifted out, or they were taught wrong. That's the context of what's going on when we come to chapter 4, verses 13 to 18.

I do want to say again, as I mentioned last week, I tried to say it very clearly, I want to say it clearly again. There are good people, good believers, good teachers, good churches, who their eschatology is not the same as what I'm going to share tonight, and what I would share any other time we preach.
We've gone through Matthew 24, 25, we've gone through Mark 13, things with the Olivet Discourse, I've taught through Revelation, I've taught through Daniel. I do acknowledge that there are people, other churches, other pastors, other Bible teachers, church members, even perhaps in our own congregation for sure, and good friends of mine outside that have a different eschatology.
And I want to be very clear and make sure we understand that if someone disagrees on eschatology, there are different views that are all within orthodoxy.
I don't want you to think that a church or a pastor or a Bible teacher who believes something different than what we believe, that they don't love the Bible, they don't take it seriously, that's not the case.
[6:53] I don't want you to hear someone teach a different view and think that that must mean, I must not be aware of that view, I've never heard of it, I've heard of it. There are some differences, and that's okay.

These things aren't a matter of fellowship, they are important and they matter, and they're significant, but they're not a test of fellowship. Whether someone is post-mill, all-mill, or pre-mill, all of those views agree that our hope is in Christ, He will return to receive us to Himself, and that He will rule and reign forever.
And so I would just want to make sure that we're clear on that, that if there is someone that you have heard that teaches something different, or if you in the future hear something, or if you're here tonight and you go to a different church, and your church believes or holds something different. There are some views that would be outside of orthodoxy, but to be sure, there are good people with great hearts who love the Lord, who would see these things differently.
A friend of mine, I just heard him preach on some things with eschatology just a few days ago, and he and I would hold to a very different view of eschatology. I love him, I'm grateful for him, he loves the Lord, he loves the Word, he's a faithful minister.
[8:08] He and I would disagree on those things, but in no way is it a matter of fellowship with us. Does that make sense? So these things matter, but I want to make sure, as we would with all doctrine, that we're biblical and that we're gracious.

It's possible to be someone who loves precision and cares about doctrine as we should, and cease to be gracious with those who may disagree.
I just want to make sure we always are gracious in our belief, in our conversation, and that we are charitable toward those who may see it differently. With that being said, let's return to verses 13 to 18, and I want to show you eight things here in this paragraph about the comfort that I believe the New Testament teaches us about the rapture of the church.
I'll give you eight points. Number one, the reality of hope. The reality of hope. Let me remind you, back in verse 18, at the end of chapter 4, he says, therefore, encourage one another with these words.
So all of this teaching on eschatology is intended to be encouraging. It's not about debate. It's not about argument. It's not about fracturing a congregation.
[9:30] It's about encouragement. So there is, in the teaching of the Bible, when you look at the last days, the reality of our hope. Verse 13, we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep.

Now, in the New Testament, the term here for asleep is a euphemism for those who have died. The word itself can refer to someone who is physically asleep, or it can refer to someone who is deceased, depends on the context.
If you trace the language back, we get our word for cemetery from this word that's used here about those who are asleep. The reason why the New Testament uses this euphemism of sleep for one

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who has died is because our bodies are not done when we die.
They're going to be resurrected. So it's as if our bodies are sleeping. Now, don't get this confused with what would be beyond the realm of orthodoxy, what's called soul sleep.
The Bible doesn't teach soul sleep. But it refers to the outer shell, our physical bodies, that when we die, we are said to be asleep because our bodies are not finished.
[10:56] So he says, I don't want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep. So we're talking about those who have died. That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

And just a quick statement here. We understand that as Christians, we do grieve. To be a faithful follower of Christ is in no way to say that it's wrong for Christians to grieve.
There are things that when you lose a loved one, you trust the Lord, but you grieve. You hurt over that. There are things that can happen in your life that you trust the providence of God, but you grieve over certain things you experience.
There may be things in your life that you don't have, blessings that you've not received, that you thought you would have, and you grieve the life that you anticipated having. To be a Christian is not in any way to say that we don't feel or that we don't grieve.
What it is to say is that we do not grieve as the world grieves. The world grieves, according to Ephesians, as those who have no hope. That's not the way Christians grieve.
[12:09] I've preached a funeral hundreds of times in my life, some of those for believers, many for believers, but I've preached the funeral of some who are not believers, and it's a very different kind of grief.

The way believers grieve for believers who have died is very different from the way an unbeliever grieves one who's died. So he says, I don't want you to be uninformed about those who are dead, that you would grieve as others who do not have hope.
And so the whole purpose of what he's saying here is we're addressing a specific problem, namely the problem of what has happened to those who have died.
When Paul has gone to Thessalonica to teach them and establish the church, we know part of what he taught them was the doctrine of eschatology, the study of the last things.
We know that from the language in his letters. And as he has taught them the hope and the promise of the glory of what happens at Christ's return, the church now, so remember, Paul goes to Thessalonica with Silas and Timothy.
[13:23] They were there briefly, start the church, teach the brothers and sisters there. People are converted. They get driven out of town. Remember all that? We've covered that length this semester.

This semester. But in that time, people that are part of that church have both been converted and died. And part of the concern of the church there is what happens to those who have died if they've got this hope of future resurrection, if they've got this hope of Christ descending and returning for them and that we're going to get our glorified bodies, is this lifting up, is this rapture, snatching away the church, is that meaning that those who have already died have missed out?
What's going to happen to them? If the thought is that when this event happens, that we who are alive in Christ get our glorified bodies to go to heaven to be with Jesus, those who have already died, did they miss out on the blessing?
That's the context. That's the concern. This is really a fascinating thing because he's addressing this because of what he's already taught them when he was there previously, which means this young church did not view eschatology as something to put off until the very end or to ignore altogether.
This is something that Paul has already instructed this very young church in so they would be established and rooted and encouraged by it. As I showed you last Sunday night, chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, of 1 Thessalonians all deals with the coming of the Lord and with his return.
[15:24] All five chapters speak of his return. This was obviously something that they had been taught, that they were familiar with, that he is wanting to encourage them in. So the reality of our hope is that he wants us to make sure that we don't grieve as the world grieves.

We don't grieve as those who have no hope. Number two, the root of our hope. What's our hope rooted in?
Verse 14. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

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What's the root of our hope? It's the work of Christ. It is because Jesus died and he rose again, and look back at verse 14, it is through Jesus that all these promises come to pass.
The root of our hope is in the finished work of Jesus. The root of the hope of heaven is not in being a good person.
[16:37] The root of our hope is not in being a good worker. The root of our hope is not in being a loving parent. All those things are good. All those things are right.

None of those things can take away our sin. When you hear people who don't know Christ as Savior talk about death and life after death, they'll talk often about heaven.
Well, on what basis does an unbeliever have hope of heaven? For that matter, if they don't believe the Bible is the word of God, why would they believe in heaven at all?
They want to take what has been revealed in the scripture but strip it away from the exclusivity of salvation in Christ. So they would retain this view of heaven but strip away the command that we would repent and believe.
The root of our hope is not that everybody goes to heaven. The root of our hope is not in our good works. It is in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
[17:43] It is in, as he says here, that we believe Jesus died and we believe he rose again. Even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

That prepositional phrase, through Jesus, is so important to understand. The root of our hope, the foundation of our assurance, the guarantee of everything we believe about the life to come is through Jesus.
Amen? It is through him. You're not going to heaven when you die because you are a good neighbor. You're not going to heaven when you die because you are an obedient child.
You're not going to heaven when you die because you are a good citizen. It's only through faith in Christ. It is his work, not ours, that is the root of our hope.
So again, to verse 18, encourage one another with these words. The exclusivity of salvation in Christ is to comfort us. What possible reason do we have to be confident that when we die, we are with the Lord?
[18:59] Here's our confidence. The root of it all is the work of Jesus. Not what we've done. What he's done. There's a third aspect, and that is the return of Christ.

Verse 14, the return of Christ. God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Now, let's back up for a minute. What happens when a Christian dies?
To be absent from the body is to be what? Present with the Lord. When a believer dies, they go to immediate fellowship with the Lord in heaven where God uniquely dwells.
Their bodies await future resurrection. That's the whole point of this passage. Now, the events that Paul is talking about here, these things are going to happen simultaneously in the twinkling of an eye.
But what we're able to see is he essentially, as some have described it, he puts this in slow motion so we can see what's happening instantaneously in the order in which it takes place, frame by frame, as some have well spoken of it.
[20:24] We believe that Jesus died and rose again. Even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by word from the Lord.

So here's what's going to happen. Christ is going to descend. The dead in Christ are with him. Their souls are going to be reunited with their glorified bodies at this moment.
The dead in Christ receive their glorified bodies and then the living believers join them in the air with our glorified bodies.
So the question is, the whole issue of the context is are those who have fallen asleep missing out? You've taught us about the hope.
You've taught us, Paul, about us going to be with the Lord. You've taught us about this future glorification of our bodies. But since you've been here, my father died and his body is in the ground.
[21:24] He's with the Lord. When these events happen, did my father miss out? And Paul's answer is no. That's the whole point of what he's comforting them with.

They've not missed out. Because in the twinkling of an eye, when the Lord descends, the dead in Christ will rise first. And then we, who are with him, will join him in the air.
Now these things are going to happen instantaneously. But if you could slow them down frame by frame, what you would see is Christ returning, the dead in Christ bodies rise first to meet him in the

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Lord, and then we meet him in the air.
John 14, 1-3 speaks of this when Jesus takes all the church to heaven with him. In fact, just stay in 1 Thessalonians, but turn back with me if you would quickly to John 14.
Because John 14 is a parallel passage. I believe John 14, 1-3 is what I think Jesus is talking about. The same thing as 1 Thessalonians 4 when we're talking about this event where believers go to meet the Lord in the air.
[22:45] I don't think this can be the second coming. Remember, the second coming is going to happen in two parts. The return of Christ in two parts. First coming, Christmas, and his return at the end of the age.

That return at the end of the age also happens in two parts. The rapture of the church and then what we call the second coming of Christ. John 14 can't be the events of the second coming because the events of the second coming lead us into the millennial kingdom.
John 14 wouldn't fit with that. Then if you say, well, I don't hold to a millennial kingdom, which good people hold that view, I still don't think John 14 fits because if you don't hold to the millennial kingdom, what you would hold to is the eternal state of Revelation 21-22, which John 14 doesn't fit in either.
Now there's another reason why I think John 14 fits perfectly well with 1 Thessalonians 4. And I want to show you this slide. This is in a book by a guy named John Wolvard.
A friend of mine who has written brilliantly on eschatology did some re-editing of this commentary. This is from page 67 of that commentary. I just want to show it to you because I think it's super helpful.
[24:01] On the left, you see John 14, 1-3. On the right, 1 Thess 4, 13-18. And look how the wording is just the exact same.

We start off by talking about trouble and sorrow and the call to believe and believe. You've got Jesus talking in John 14, so it's Jesus and God.
Same as 1 Thessalonians 4. I told you, verse 14, I say to you, I will come again, the coming of the Lord. I will receive you.
In 1 Thess 4, 17, you will be caught up. In John 14, you will be to myself. That's with Jesus. Verse 17, you'll be with the Lord. So that, John 14, 3, where I am, you'll be with me.
1 Thess 4, to ever be with the Lord. It's very difficult to see John 14 and 1 Thessalonians 4 as not talking about the exact same event.
[25:01] So how would John 14 come to pass? John 14, let not your hearts be troubled. Sounds familiar.

Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself.
that where I am, you may be also. This is the hope that the people in Thessalonica have that Jesus was going to come and take them to himself.
John 14 says, you would enjoy rooms in the Father's house. This can't be at the end of the second coming because that's when you go into the millennial kingdom.
Again, if you don't hold to millennial kingdom, John 14 still doesn't fit because you'd be going to the eternal state. When is it that you would have rooms designed for the church where Jesus comes and takes the people for himself?
[26:14] John 14, same as 1 Thessalonians 4. And this is the hope that the church in Thessalonica has been clinging to.

Their fear is that while they knew they were going to go through affliction, their understanding is they would be delivered from the day of tribulation, the great tribulation the Bible speaks of in several places.
Now, if they're going through the tribulation, then there's a problem. Here's the problem that they're facing. People have told them the affliction you're going through is actually the tribulation.
And if you're actually going through the tribulation, then Jesus did not keep his promise to come and receive you and take you where he is. To that, Paul writes the words of 1 Thessalonians 4 that they would be comforted.
The fourth thing we see is the resolution of their concern. We see that in verse 15. For this we declare to you a word from the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord,

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will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
[27:39] So we're getting back to the resolution of their problem. What problem? I'd tell you they had. Did those who died, have they missed out? If we have this promise of resurrection, of glorified bodies, if we have this promise of going to be with the Lord that where he is will dwell in the Father's house in these many rooms, by the way, the emphasis in John 14 is not how big your mansion is, it's that you have a room in the Father's house.

That's the point. Not how great you are, how gracious he is. Lot of bad, bad preaching and theology that is so man-centered that gets you to focus on how big your mansion will be.
Here's what the text tells you. Here's the good news of the gospel. You have a room in the Father's house. You're welcomed in the Father's house.
You belong through grace in the Father's house. That may mess up some of your old songs you learned, but I would tell you, go with the Bible, not the gospel song you learned.
And so he says, here's the resolution of their concern. We who are alive, who are left at the coming of the Lord, are not going to precede those who have died.
[29:15] The ones who have died are not missing out. They will rise first and then we'll receive our glorified bodies. It's going to happen like that.

It's going to feel instantaneous. It's a twinkling of an eye. But if you slow the frame down, those who have died in Christ are going to be with the Lord and then we will join them.
In other words, the living do not get a head start on those who have died. In fact, it's a double negative here. It says that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
The language suggests here they will not, they certainly will not. Christians who have died have not missed out on the promise that they will be with the Lord.
Number five, the removal of the church. Verse 16, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and the sound of a trumpet, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
[30:30] The Lord himself is going to appear. This is not an ambassador, this is not a spokesman, this is the Lord himself.

Now that matters because it tells us that we are not just waiting for an event, we're waiting for the person of Christ. One of the things that can let you know whether you belong to Jesus for real or not is this, would you be satisfied in an eternal state if it had everything you wanted but did not have Jesus?
The unbeliever would say, of course. Give me a life with no pain, no heartache, no cancer, no earthquakes.
Yes. But for the Christian, we're not just waiting for circumstances to change, we are longing for his appearing. Amen? It's a huge difference.
We're not longing just to have life as we want it, we're longing to no longer look through a glass dimly, but to see him face to face.
[31:45] Christians long for the appearing of Christ, not just circumstances to be how they want it to be. We're waiting for a person, not just an event.

The Lord himself will descend from heaven. He's descending, not returning. When the text in the New Testament speaks of the second coming, it speaks of his return and staying because when Christ comes in his second coming, he's entering into, taking us into the millennial kingdom.
In the second coming passages, Christ comes to the earth, lands here on the earth, splits the mountain in two. In this text, he's not coming to the earth, he's coming in the air on the clouds. We're going to meet him in the air. Second coming, he descends. The rapture, we go to him. And he says it happens with a cry of command.
In other words, it's a sudden thing. It's a word that was spoken of of a military commander who would call soldiers to action. It's a summons.
[33:03] It's a cry of command. It's a shout of the Lord to gather his people in the air. You say, well, how will we know his voice? John 5 says, my sheep, what?

Know my voice. The world does not. The sheep do. A cry of command with the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet of God.
I don't want to confuse you. I just want to keep you from getting confused. This is not the same as the trumpet judgments in Revelation. Revelation speaks of the seals and the bowls and the

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trumpets.
that's not what this is. This is the trumpet of the summons of the people of God.
Stay in 1 Thessalonians and turn quickly to 1 Corinthians. There's really three texts you need to know. 1 Thessalonians 4, 13 to 18, John 14, 1 to 3, and 1 Corinthians 15, 50 through 57.
[34:26] 1 Corinthians 15, verse 50. I tell you, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. We're not all going to die, but we shall all be changed. How does that happen?
Because there will be those alive at the rapture of the church. Verse 52, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, that's how quickly it happens, at the last trumpet, this is the last trumpet for the church, for the body of Christ, the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we, those who are alive, shall be changed.
For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and the mortal body must put on immortality. Do you see his argument in 1 Corinthians 15?
There's going to be a trumpet and not everyone's going to have died, but at the trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ will be changed and we who are not asleep, we who are alive, will have our bodies changed from perishable, these bodies that can die, to imperishable, a glorified body that cannot die.
[35:59] So 1 Corinthians 15 is answering the same issue we see in 1 Thessalonians 4, what happens to the dead in Christ? Have they missed out?

And the answer is no. They will rise first. Okay, then if they rise first, have we missed out? If those who are alive when this event happens, have we missed out?
No, this all happens in the twinkling of an eye. I read a lot of interesting details that some Christian scholars as well as those in the medical community of trying to describe exactly what is the twinkling of an eye.
I feel like it's three hours of my life, I just never get back. Let me tell you what the twinkling of an eye is. It's really fast. Okay, it's really fast. Dead in Christ, we who are alive, it's really fast.
And when this happens, we are with the Lord. Now back to 1 Thessalonians 4, he says, the dead in Christ will rise first.
[37:17] That's the very end of verse 16. This is a very specific kind of dead person. Who is getting their glorified bodies first at the rapture of the church?

It's the dead in Christ. It's believers in the church age. This is not the same as Revelation 20 that speaks of the unsaved dead being brought back.
That is where they would face the great white throne judgment. this is speaking specifically of those who are dead in Christ, Christians of the church age.
They're not disadvantaged because rapture day is resurrection day. And you say, well, what will our glorified bodies be like?
What will our glorified bodies look like? 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of it. 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of it. Let me just tell you what Philippians 3 says about this.
[38:30] Philippians 3 verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body.

Our glorified body will be like His glorified body. meaning the limitations that we face here with these finite bodies are done away with.
We'll have properties similar to what we know now but without any effect of sin, without any effect of sickness, without any effect of aging, without any effect of the harm and the pain of the world.
Jesus glorified body. He walked through walls. He appeared out of nowhere. Luke 24 with the guys on the road to Emmaus. He went straight up in the book of Acts at the ascension and Philippians 3 says, our bodies will be like His bodies.
Number six, the resurrection of the body. The resurrection of the body. This is verse 17. Then, we who are alive, we who are left, so this is the next sequence, that in Christ, rise first, then, we who are alive go to be with Him.
[40:08] People get tripped up on how is Jesus going to give glorified bodies to people if they've been dead a long time and their physical bodies in the grave have turned to dust or of someone who was burned by fire or someone who was buried at sea.

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And I just want to say, and I mean this sincerely and respectfully, if the Lord can create the universe by the power of His will and spoken word, this is no problem.
It astounds me how many people get tripped up on this. How is the Lord going to give a glorified body to someone who's been dead for 2,000 years?
Well, you don't have a problem believing that He created the heavens and the earth? You don't have a problem believing that Jesus raised the dead? You don't have a problem believing that Jesus Himself was raised from the dead?
You don't have a problem believing that He's going to rule and reign in the eternal state forever and forever and forever? But you think this one part of the promise was just too hard for Him? This is no problem at all. The Lord will take the bodies of those who have died in Christ.
[41:24] They will be glorified in the air and right after that, then it says, then, after that, we who are alive, we who are left, will be caught up together with the Lord.

This is the doctrine of imminency, that this could happen any time. there are signs that must happen before the second coming. There are no signs that must happen before the rapture of the church. Let me say that a different way. There are things that must happen according to the revelation of the Bible that would precede Christ's second coming to earth.
There is nothing that needs to happen before the rapture of the church. The events of 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 can literally happen any moment.
Now, one of the arguments against this view of the rapture is that the word rapture doesn't appear in the Bible.
[42:28] And that's kind of true. It's not exactly true. Verse 17, Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up.

That's the word. Arpatso. Caught up. Snatched up. Plundered. Seized. with the Lord.
When the New Testament was translated from Greek into Latin, the Greek word arpatso was translated as rapeo and a word meaning to seize or to snatch from rapeo.
We get in English our word for rapture. So where is the word rapture in the Bible? It's arpatso.
Verse 17, Caught up with him. Let me just, I think this will help you.
Bear with me for just a minute. Turn to Matthew 13. I want to take in a very, very fast survey here because I think this is significant. I want to show you how the word is used in the New Testament.
[43:41] Matthew 13. verse 19. See if you can find where this word is used.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. You see the word? Go to John 6.
John 6.
Verse 15. Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king. Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.
Come to seize, to plunder, to snatch away. Go to Acts 8. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts.
[44:43] chapter 8. Verse 39. And when they came up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way.

The spirit of the Lord carried him, took him away. Snatched up, carried away. And then I'll show you one more. 2 Corinthians. chapter 12.
Verse 2. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know.
God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise. Back to 1 Thessalonians 4.
Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with him. I mentioned last week, everybody believes in the rapture of the church.
[46:03] It's just a question of timing. Everyone believes. If you believe 1 Thessalonians 4, everybody believes, if you believe the text is right, that we're going to be caught up with him.

Right? Everybody believes that. The question is, when does this happen? I think 1 Corinthians 15, John 14, 1 Thessalonians 4, in the context of which it is being given, makes clear this is happening before the time of the tribulation.
it happens in the twinkling of an eye. Seven, the reassurance from Christ. The reassurance from Christ.
Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with him in the clouds to meet him, to meet the Lord in the air, so we will always be with the Lord.

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Church, this is the hope that brings assurance. We will be with the Lord. Now, remember the context.
[47:13] Context is key in interpreting any passage. Their fear is they've been wrongly told that they have missed the rapture and that they are in the day of the Lord, in this day of judgment.

And if they're in the day of judgment, then either they weren't true believers, and they missed the Lord's return to get them, or they've been taught wrong.
He's dealt with that and will deal with that in the coming letters. The other issue is these who have already died, are they missing out?
He's made clear, no, they're not missing on anything. They will rise first. Well, will we miss out? No. We will then meet him in the Lord. Well, is this going to be a long break between the dead and Christ getting their glorified bodies, and those who are alive getting their glorified bodies?
No, it happens in the twinkling of an eye. What's the reassurance? It's what Jesus said in John 14, which is a slide that I put up where the language is the exact same as 1 Thessalonians 4.
[48:18] We will be caught up with him, that where he is, we will be, and we will forever be with him. Now, what you don't see in John 14, and what you don't see in 1 Thessalonians 4, is words about the judgment of nations who are dividing the sheep and the goats.

Why is that? Because those are second coming passages. This happens in two phases. If 1 Thessalonians 4 was talking about the second coming, there should be words of the division of the sheep and the goats, of judgment, of condemnation, and of a kingdom.
But you don't have that because this is a different event. And the promise in this text and John 14 is that when the Lord returns for his church, we meet him in the air, the dead in Christ, who have already been with the Lord, they're with the Lord today, but awaiting their glorified bodies.
At the rapture, they receive their glorified bodies, the church who's alive receives their glorified bodies, and we are in a place prepared for us by Jesus that where he is, we will be with him, and we have a room in the Father's house.
Lastly, verse 18, the reason for his teaching. What's the reason for all of this passage? It's verse 18. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.
[50:09] This is the whole point. that the church will be comforted. So don't get lost in the debate. My friends who are post-mill, my friends who are all-mill, my friends who are historic pre-mill, all of us would agree that our hope is that Christ is coming again and we will be with him.

Now, I will say to strip away what I believe this passage teaches and just say, you know what? I don't understand it. I can't get it all.
It's too confusing. We'll just be with him someday. That's fine. It's what has cutely been described as pan-millennialism. It will all pan out in the end.
Not only is that the cowardly way out of this, it misses the whole reason for the teaching.
the reason is encourage one another with these things. Do you have a loved one who's preceded you in death?
[51:35] Probably everybody in this room has a loved one that's a believer that's already died. Have they missed out? This text says no way.

They've not missed out. They didn't die too early. They're absent from the body. They're present with the Lord. They're really in heaven, really with the Lord right now.
They're not missing out on anything. Well, will they miss on their glorified body? This passage says be encouraged. No way have they missed out. In fact, at the rapture of the church, they're going to get their glorified body first.
And you say, oh my goodness, that's great, but what about us? Now I'm nervous for us. Have we missed out? 1 Corinthians 15 says no. That in Christ rise first, then we who remain, we who are alive, we who do not sleep, we who are still living, when the rapture of the church happens, we will be with him and the Lord, and how quick is it going to happen?
In the twinkling of an eye. Well, where are we going to go? Be encouraged, John 14, to the Father's house.
[52:44] And you have a room prepared for you, in the Father's house. And at the end of the tribulation, when the events of the second coming take place, then we all return with him, not in the air, descend to the earth, where then he will separate the sheep from the goats, and all the judgment passages come to be, and then we inherit the kingdom prepared for us.

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The early Christians had their hope fixed on this. They had a word they would greet each other with, Maranatha. They would greet each other and say, Maranatha, meaning our Lord come.
They were waiting, expecting, and longing. It's transliterated from Aramaic into the Greek text, Maranatha, which just means our Lord come.
You can see it in 1 Corinthians 16, 22. And may that be our hope today. He will come. We will meet him in the air.
We will go to be with him in the Father's house, where we have a room, that where he is, we will be also.
[54:16] Therefore, encourage one another with these words. Amen? Lord, we thank you for your word tonight.

I pray it's been helpful. I pray anything I said that was confusing or unclear would be forgotten because my words are irrelevant if they're not a faithful explanation of what you've already revealed to us.
So, where I've said anything that was unclear, may it just be erased from their hearts and minds that what they would be left with is the comfort of your word, that you will receive us to yourself, that we have a real future in a real heaven with real glorified bodies, with those who have already died in faith, where we will be with them forever and forever.
And as much as we anticipate that and with every person in this sanctuary, I suppose, longing to once again be reunited with their loved ones as we will be, we also acknowledge there will be nothing as sweet as on that day seeing you face to face.
May we be encouraged by these words, in Christ's name, amen. I've kept you a few minutes late, but this is our last one until January, so you're lucky getting out when you are.
[55:50] Love you, church. God bless you. You're dismissed. God bless you.

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