

Parousia (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14 & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) 17-Mar-19¹

We're continuing our 9-part series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica - and we're looking at Part 7

[PowerPoint 1-Letter]

There are Bibles in front of you and a sermon outline in the bulletin if you want to take notes.

Please have your Bibles turned to Ecclesiastes 12 first of all, and then 1 Thessalonians chapter 4

Let me pray for God's help before we begin. Let's pray...

Intro

So, this morning [evening] we're tackling the question:

[PowerPoint 2-Intro]

What happens when we die?

But before we tackle the question, let's get the context we're looking at

Context

[PowerPoint 3heading-Context]

[PowerPoint 3a]

- About AD 33 Jesus (God's Son) died on the cross for the sin of the world and He offered forgiveness of sins - to those who believe in Him. In dying on the cross Jesus proves He has power over sin

[PowerPoint 3b]

- 3 days after His death - Jesus is raised back to Life - to show He has power over death too - and to offer people who believe in Him - their own resurrection and to receive eternal life with God forever

[PowerPoint 3c]

- For 6 weeks after His resurrection - He was seen alive by 500 people and then He ascended to Heaven in a cloud

[PowerPoint 3d]

- The angel present when Jesus ascended said - Jesus would return one day the same way He went to Heaven - in a cloud (Acts 1:11)

[PowerPoint 3e]

- About AD 52 - The Apostle Paul established a church in Thessalonica (Greece) and then wrote a letter to them

[PowerPoint 4Heading-Context]

[PowerPoint 4a]

- In chapter 4 of this letter v13-18 - The Thessalonians are concerned - that if Jesus returns - which they thought He would any day - what will happen to the Christian Thessalonians who were already dead - would they miss out on this wonderful event of Jesus returning?

[PowerPoint 4b]

- This return of Jesus is known by the Greek Word - Parousia - which means 2nd Coming

[PowerPoint 4c]

- So, Paul in v13-18 reassures the Thessalonians of exactly what happens when they die and what exactly happens when Jesus returns

But before we look at Jesus' return (Parousia)

I'd like us to look at

1. **Approaching Death** (Ecclesiastes 12:1-6, 8)
2. Then - **What happens when we die** (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:23; 23:43)
3. Then we'll look at **Jesus' Return** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:27; John 5:28-29)

So first approaching death - so please turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

[PowerPoint 5-Approaching Death]

1. Approaching Death (Ecclesiastes 12:1-6, 8)

[PowerPoint 5a]

- In our OT reading the writer (King Solomon) in his old age - explores the meaning of life - His conclusion is life of Earth is meaningless, temporary, just like vapour or a bubble - and in chapter 12 - he concludes, we should remember how God created us - especially in the days of our youth (v1)

[PowerPoint 5b]

- Because as we get older - we will find no pleasure in getting old (v1)

[PowerPoint 6-Approaching Death]

[PowerPoint 6a]

Then what follows in the rest of chapter 12 is a *poetic look* at what life is like when we get old...

[PowerPoint 6b]

- V3-the keepers of the house tremble = arms/hands/legs start trembling

[PowerPoint 6c]

- V3-strong men stoop = legs/knees weaken - causing us to stoop

[PowerPoint 6d]

- V4-the grinders cease because they are few = teeth fallout & chewing becomes difficult - there were no false teeth back then!

[PowerPoint 6e]

- V3-those looking through the windows grow dim = eyesight deteriorates

[PowerPoint 6f]

- V4-doors to the street are closed - can't hear outside like we used to

[PowerPoint 6g]

- V4 - sound of grinding fades - hearing gets worse

[PowerPoint 6h]

- V4-people rise at the sound of birds - we wake up easily or can't sleep - an ant sneezes and we wake up

[PowerPoint 7heading]

- V4-all their songs grow faint - again hearing but also less appreciation for songs/music

[PowerPoint 7a]

- V5-people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets = people get more fearful as they get older = they're afraid to go out = scared of answering the door = they're scared of fly or an ant

[PowerPoint 7b]

- V5- the almond tree blossoms = hair becomes white/grey

[PowerPoint 7c]

- V5-grasshopper drags itself along = we used to be active and buzzing and jumping around - now we can barely put one foot in front of the other

[PowerPoint 7d]

- V5-desire no longer stirred = passion and zeal for life dwindles

[PowerPoint 7e]

- V6-Silver cord is severed = our spine weakens or collapses

[PowerPoint 7f]

- V6-Godlen bowl is broken = brain/skull - memory fading

[PowerPoint 7g]

- V6-The pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel broken at the well -= heart and lungs deteriorate

Solomon's Conclusion about life on Earth - v8 meaningless meaningless

What's the point?

Well thankfully there's more to life than just life on Earth

The same writer of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon, says this earlier in chapter 3

[PowerPoint 8=Ecc 3:11]

He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecc 3:11)

2. Then - What happens when we die (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:23; 23:43)

[PowerPoint 9-Heading]

So, what happens when we die?

[PowerPoint 9a-body/spirit]

- Our Body turns to dust (through burial or cremation) and the dust returns to the ground where it came from (remember the 1st man Adam created from dust) - (Ecc 12:7)
- And our soul/spirit - [explain soul=immaterial part of us designed for eternity and spirit=immaterial part of us that connects to God (can be alive or dead depending if Christian or not) - our soul/spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc 12:7)]

[PowerPoint 9b-Luke 23:43]

- We know that believers in Jesus go straight to be with the Lord - because of what Jesus said to one of the thieves of the cross who believed in Jesus, see Luke 23:43 - "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

[PowerPoint 9c-Luke 16:23]

- And we know non-believers go to Hell when they die because Luke 16:23 say the unbelieving rich man was in torment [in Hell], he looked up and saw Abraham far away [in Heaven]...

So, Christians - when they die - their soul goes to Heaven immediately - and their body is buried or cremated

And non-Christians - when they die - their soul goes to Hell immediately - and their body is buried or cremated

Then our NT passage tells us what happens next

[Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]

3. Then Jesus' Return (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:27; John 5:28-29)

What happens next is that Jesus will return some day

[PowerPoint 10-Heading]

When Jesus returns

[PowerPoint 10a]

First, He will come back the same way he went (Acts 1:11)

The Thessalonians knew Jesus would return - Paul had taught them that.

They thought it would be soon!

[PowerPoint 10b]

So, they're worried what will happen to the Christians who are already dead - when Jesus returns - will they miss out on this wonderful event of Jesus' Return?

Paul says - no they won't miss out

He says in v13

[PowerPoint 10c]

Those who are asleep in death (*the Greek Word used here is koiman which means to put to sleep, and gives the Greek Word koimeterion which means*

sleeping place or dormitory, and the in Latin it is coemeterium, which in French is cimetièrè where we get our English Word - cemetery)

Paul says those Christians who sleep in death are not like non-Christians who have no hope

[PowerPoint 10d]

All Christians have certain hope they will go to Heaven

How can Paul have this certain hope?

Because in v14 he has the evidence or proof of Jesus death (for our sins to be forgiven) and the evidence or proof of Jesus' resurrection (defeating death and offering eternal life for those who believe)

[PowerPoint 10e]

So, in V15 - Paul says those Christians who are alive will not take precedence over the Christians who are asleep (i.e. dead Christians)

[PowerPoint 11-Heading]

[PowerPoint 11a]

Because in v16 - Jesus Himself will come from heaven - on a cloud - just like He went to Heaven in a cloud

[PowerPoint 11b]

And still in v16 Jesus will come with a loud command, a voice of an archangel - and the trumpet call of God = victory call/sound/trumpet!

[PowerPoint 11c]

Then the dead Christians will rise from the dead first

Then V17 - the Christians who are still alive = will be caught up [rapture] with the risen Christians - to meet the Lord in the air (it's flying time)
And all Christians will be with the Lord Forever! Yay

What about non-Christians?

Well Hebrews 9:27

[PowerPoint 11d]

Tell us all people must die and all must face judgment - that's Christians and Non-Christians

Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

This judgment involves us all appearing before Jesus

As Paul says in 2 Cor 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

When this judgment is carried out

[PowerPoint 11e]

Jesus Himself says - everyone will hear His voice and rise

As He says in John 5:28-29

²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good [believed in Jesus] will rise to live (HEAVEN), and those who have done what is evil [not believed in Jesus] will rise to be condemned (HELL)

[PowerPoint 12-Application]

So, 3 applications for us - to apply to our lives today:

Applications

[PowerPoint 12a-App1]

1. We (as Christians) can draw comfort and encouragement from knowing - that when we die [don't need to worry about dying] - our soul goes to be with the Lord immediately on death - and we can have a certain confidence that when Jesus returns, we will get a resurrected body - and our faith means we will live forever with God in Heaven. Paul wants us to encourage others with this truth - because it means we have a certain hope of Heaven

[PowerPoint 12b-App2]

2. For a non-Christian who dies - there is no hope of Heaven. The only option is Hell. So, it's absolutely critical that non-Christians come to believe in Jesus before it's too late. [Believer's prayer]

[Dear Lord,

I admit that I am a sinner.

I have done many things that don't please you.

I have lived my life for myself only.

I am sorry, and I repent.

I ask you to forgive me.

I believe that you died on the cross for me, to save me.

You did what I could not do for myself.

I come to you now and ask you to take control of my life; I give it to you.

From this day forward, help me to live every day for you and in a way that pleases you.

I love you, Lord, and I thank you that I will spend all eternity with you.

In Jesus Name, Amen]

[PowerPoint 12c-App3

3. As we don't know when the Parousia (Jesus 2nd Coming) will happen - there is a great urgency for us, as Christians, to tell everyone, about what Jesus gives us - that is - the forgiveness of sins and eternal life

Conclusion

[PowerPoint 13-Conclusion]

In the meantime:

Let's take on board King Solomon's conclusion to our life on Earth

¹³ Now all has been heard;

here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments,

for this is the duty of all mankind.

¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment,

including every hidden thing,

whether it is good or evil.

Let's pray...