

# GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

## Returning to Our Roots

### STUDY FIFTEEN

## His Coming Is Sure . . . Are You?

*1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*

*The hope that gets me through the tests on this earth is the same hope that will get me through the grave at death. The One in whom I have believed has gone before me and paved the way.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**N**EXT to the truth of our salvation stands the hope of our resurrection. Christ not only saves us from judgment through His death on the cross, but He also secures our life beyond the grave through His resurrection. Jesus assured us, “Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying” (John 11:25). We *will* live after death. Our resurrection is as certain as the sun rising on a new day.

These twin doctrines of salvation and resurrection are the mountain peaks of our faith, lifting our eyes upward with hope when we need it most. When a loved one dies, our hearts break and we grieve. But we do “not grieve like people who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Unlike the tears of the hopeless, our tears fall from eyes fixed on our Savior who will someday raise the dead and restore all things.

The New Testament resonates with anticipation of Christ’s return, mentioning it over three hundred times. It’s even the final thought of Scripture: “Yes, I am coming soon!” promised Jesus, and John responded, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

What would it be like to wake up every morning with the hopeful thought, “Christ may come today!”? What a wonderful perspective! This *Searching the Scriptures* study stirs our anticipation of meeting Jesus face-to-face as we discover what the Bible says about His coming and the promises He will fulfill.



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## His Coming Is Sure . . . Are You?

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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

“Wake up,” the apostle Paul calls to his readers, “for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). If your spiritual senses have felt drowsy lately, ask the Lord to rouse them with the anticipation of His coming.

*Father, awaken my heart with the exciting truth of Your Son’s coming. All the prophecies pointing to His first advent are fulfilled, and now, His coming can happen at any moment. Teach me from Your Word the truths I must know to ready myself for His appearing. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

A full study of the end times events would take us deep into Daniel and Revelation, but we’ll limit this study to two aspects of our future destiny found in *1 Corinthians 15:50–58* and *1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*. The Corinthian passage emphasizes the *changes* that will come over us when Christ returns, and the Thessalonian passage emphasizes the *order of events* surrounding the coming of Christ.



### Observation: Scriptures that Describe Our Destiny

When observing didactic passages, look for the logical sequence of ideas, action words, commands, contrasts, and key words to define in the interpretation phase. Read the verses carefully, lingering over each line.

#### How Our Bodies Will Change—1 Corinthians 15:50–58

What point did Paul make about earthly bodies and the Kingdom of God in *1 Corinthians 15:50*?



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What “wonderful secret” did Paul reveal in *1 Corinthians 15:51*? Notice the contrast.

How did Paul explain the transformation of our bodies in *15:52–53*? What will happen to the bodies of those who have died and those who are alive when Christ returns? What is the purpose of the transformation?

*There must be some kind of molecular reconstruction that will come upon us in a glorified state that will equip us to last eternally. Our existence in eternity will be in a body, not simply in spirit. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

What does the glorification of our bodies signify, according to *15:54–57*?



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How did Paul apply this truth to our daily experience in *1 Corinthians 15:58*?

In the instant we see our Savior's eyes sparkle, our bodies will be changed. What will our new bodies be like? We'll hold that question for the interpretation section. For now, let's uncover more details about Christ's return in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians.

### **The Order of Events When Christ Returns—1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to address their fear that loved ones who died before Christ's return might miss the coming kingdom. What did Paul say to correct the misunderstanding in *1 Thessalonians 4:13–14*? Whose spirits will the Lord bring with Him when He returns?

Who was the source of Paul's information about Christ's return in *4:15*, and what was the promise?



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Paul was teaching new information that He received directly from the Lord. Write down the order of events that Paul outlined in *1 Thessalonians 4:16–17*.

*I observe four points in Paul's teaching. First, we are to be informed—ignorance is not bliss. Second, we are not to grieve as those without hope. Third, we are to face death without fear. Fourth, we are to know the order of events when Christ returns. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

What did Paul say you should do with this information, according to *4:18*?

This passage raises our curiosity. What does it mean to be “caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (*4:17*)? Now we have two questions to answer in the interpretation section.



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### Interpretation: Key Questions to Answer

First, what will our resurrected, glorified bodies be like? John provides a clue to answering this question in *1 John 3:1–2*. What did he say?

What features of Jesus' resurrected body did He exhibit in *Luke 24:28–43*? What do the characteristics of His glorified body imply about our future bodies?

Second, what does it mean to be “caught up”? Survey the explanation of this phrase in your Bible study resources and write down a few notes about its meaning. You might consult Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, or the online resource, [gotquestions.com](http://gotquestions.com), in the article, “*What is the rapture of the church?*”



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In summary, when Christ returns, “We will all be transformed!” Paul said (1 Corinthians 15:51). Christ will transform first the bodies of dead believers (whose spirits had already gone to heaven) and then the bodies of living believers. *Finally*, all believers in their glorified bodies will “be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), the event known as the rapture of the church.

The *transformation* of our earthly bodies into glorified bodies and our *transportation* to “be with the Lord forever” will be instantaneous (1 Thessalonians 4:17). What a comfort to know that death will never again separate us from our loved ones, and we will live with the Lord forever.

*The return of Christ is a promise to claim when trials break out and there seems to be no reason for them. Remember, when He comes, it will all make sense. Believe His Word . . . He is coming again. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Correlation: What Christ Said About His Return**

During His ministry on earth, Jesus frequently mentioned His return, sometimes as a sober warning to unbelievers of the coming judgment. What did Jesus warn in [Matthew 24:37–39](#)?

Jesus also looked forward to reuniting with His followers, like a husband anticipates embracing His bride after a long absence. What encouragement did Jesus give in [John 14:1–3](#)?



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What promise did the angels give to the disciples on the Mount of Olives right after Jesus ascended into heaven, according to *Acts 1:9–11*?

After witnessing Christ's ascension, the disciples tucked the angels' promise of Christ's return into their hearts and returned to their homes full of hope. Soon after, at Pentecost, the church was born when the Holy Spirit came, and Christ's mission to spread the gospel to the world was launched—a mission we still obey.

### **Application: Actions that Reveal Our Readiness**

Jesus urged His followers to watch for His return. “Be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected” (Matthew 24:44). What does readiness look like? We are ready for Christ's return when we . . .

Walk by *faith*, not by sight.

Live in *peace*, not in panic.

Rely on *hope*, not on self.

These ideals are possible only in the power of the Holy Spirit. In what circumstance do you need the Spirit's power to help you walk by faith today? Live in peace? Rely on hope? Ask for His power.



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How can setting your mind on Christ's return help you walk by faith, live in peace, and rely on hope?

Earlier, we asked the question: What would it be like to wake up every morning with the hopeful thought, "Christ may come today!"? Begin tomorrow morning with that thought by writing Revelation 22:20 on a card and placing it on your bedside table. Jesus said,

*"Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)*

Say the words when you wake, carry them with you through the day, and remember them before you go to sleep. Set your hope on Christ's coming, and watch your faith, peace, and hope grow.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, thank You for the promise that Jesus will return to transform my body so I can live with You for eternity. What a comfort to know that the old enemy death has lost its power. I need not fear the future because my future is secure with You. "I am coming soon," Jesus said. Come, Lord Jesus, come! In His name, amen.*

