**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | In the Twinkling of an Eye |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2173 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. When Jesus ascended after the resurrection, He promised that He would come again.
   2. The early Christians expected Jesus to return in their day at any moment.
   3. Since they expected Jesus to return in their lifetime, the Christians in Thessalonica were concerned that their loved ones, who had already died, might miss the Kingdom of God since they would not be living at the time of Christ’s return.
   4. In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians to address this concern.
      1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
         1. There are three great enemies in this passage:
            1. Ignorance
            2. Sorrow
            3. Hopelessness
            4. This is what happens to those who do not understand Scripture.

They are living in ignorance.

They are filled with sorrow.

They are living lives of despair and have no hope.

* 1. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4 about the rapture of the church.
     1. The rapture will happen in the twinkling of an eye.
     2. The average person blinks their eyes 20,000 times a day.
        1. 20,000 times a day, Jesus may come.

1. WHAT - THE SACRED MYSTERY OF RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE   
   (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
   1. The central figure in the resurrection and the rapture is the Lord Jesus Christ.
   2. Jesus Christ will one day step from His throne in Heaven and literally come back to the Earth with a shout.
      1. This shout will raise the dead.
         1. At Jesus’ command, Christians who have already died will rise from their graves or wherever they may have died.
      2. Then the living saints will be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.
         1. 1 Thessalonians 4:17
            1. This passage tells us that the Apostle Paul expected Jesus to return in his lifetime.
   3. The phrase “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4 is what we call “the rapture.”
      1. The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word “rapto” and the Greek word “harpazo.”
         1. Both words mean “a catching away.”
         2. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
      2. The English word “rapture” is not found in the Bible.
         1. The English word “trinity” is not found in the Bible, nor is the English word “missions.”
         2. But the trinity, missions and the rapture are all taught in the Bible.
      3. The Greek word “harpazo” is also used in the following passages:
         1. Acts 8:39
            1. Phillip was caught away; suddenly vanished.
            2. The usage of this word in this instance means “to catch away speedily.”
         2. John 6:15
            1. The word “to take by force” is the same word that in other places is translated “caught up.”
            2. This means that neither grave nor gravity will be able to hold us.
         3. 1 Corinthians 12:1
            1. The same word is used as “carried away.”
            2. In the rapture, we will be carried away; transported from one place to another.
         4. Acts 23:10
            1. The phrase “take him by force” is the same phrase we translate as rapture, and it means “to rescue from danger.”
            2. The rapture occurs, we will be taken by force, moved to a new place, and delivered from danger.
   4. Paul calls this a mystery.
      1. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
         1. We get our word “atom” from the word “moment” used in this passage.
            1. This denotes the most indivisible thing our language can describe.
            2. In the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ will rise first; and then we which are alive will be changed and caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.
      2. If we have the same nature as Jesus Christ, we will be caught away to meet Him in the air.
   5. How are we assured of these things?
      1. By the saving work of our Lord; Jesus died and rose again.
         1. 1 Thessalonians 4:14
         2. The Gospel itself is supernatural.
         3. God is not finished.
         4. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He will raise us.
         5. This same Jesus who came the first time literally and rose from the dead, is coming back the second time literally.
            1. The same Jesus that was born of a virgin.
            2. The same Jesus that walked on the water.
            3. The same Jesus that fed the 5,000.
         6. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is necessary to fulfill the purpose of God.
            1. The incarnation without the coronation would be like height without depth and east without west.
            2. Our salvation without our glorification is no salvation at all.
         7. His resurrection is the pledge of our resurrection.
      2. By the sure Word of our Lord.
         1. 1 Thessalonians 4:15
         2. There are all kinds of fortune tellers and seers and prognosticators, but only God knows the future.
            1. The devil does not know what will happen in the future.
         3. One-third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
         4. The first and last promise in both the Old and New Testaments deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
2. WHO - THE SAVIOR AND THE SAINTS (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
   1. There is a select multitude of the Savior and the saints.
      1. The rapture is not a general resurrection.
         1. There is a first and a second resurrection.
      2. Only the dead in Christ will be raised at the rapture.
         1. Revelation 20:5-6
            1. The dead in Christ are the ones who will be raised; those in the first resurrection.
      3. There are only two ways to die: in Christ or out of Christ.
         1. If you are born twice, you will only die once.
         2. If you are born once, then you will die twice.
            1. Those who die twice will one day wish they had never been born at all.
   2. Just as there is not a general resurrection, there will also be no general rapture.
      1. Not everyone on Earth will be caught up to meet the Lord.
      2. Only those who follow Jesus Christ will be caught away in the rapture.
         1. 1 Thessalonians 4:17
         2. Luke 17:34-37
            1. These are the words of Jesus.
            2. There is a select multitude; not everyone will go.
3. WHEN - A SUDDEN MOMENT THAT IS CLOSE AND CERTAIN (1 Corinthians 15:52)
   1. We are always living on the edge of eternity.
   2. The Bible says that the time is at hand, the Second Coming of Jesus is always close and it is always certain.
      1. Revelation 1:3
   3. Paul was expecting Jesus to return in His day, and he was right.
      1. Matthew 24:36
         1. If anyone gives a date as to when Jesus Christ will return, he is a liar.
      2. Matthew 24:38-39
         1. Some believe that the church will go through the Great Tribulation; this is not what Scripture says.
         2. The daily round of life will be occurring when Jesus Christ suddenly returns.
      3. Matthew 24:42
      4. Matthew 24:44
      5. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
         1. The word “sleep” in this passage is a metaphor for a Christian who has died.
   4. We are not waiting for a sign to come to pass before the rapture can take place.
      1. But signs do give indication that His return is nearing.
      2. We should always be ready for Jesus’ return.
   5. The sounds of the rapture:
      1. 1 Thessalonians 4:16
      2. The shout
         1. The shout is the Lord’s voice Himself.
            1. Jesus called forth Lazarus with a shout.

John 11:43

* + - 1. When Jesus returns, He will give a shout, and the whole church will come forth.
         1. The shout is pointed primarily to the church.
    1. The voice of the archangel
       1. Archangel is the chief angel in charge of Heaven’s armies.
       2. He is speaking primarily to Israel.
       3. After the church is taken out, God begins to move again with the nation of Israel, not just individual Jews as He does today.
       4. He will martial the angels in preparation for the Great Tribulation.
    2. The trump of God
       1. The trump deals primarily with Israel.
       2. After the church is raptured, God begins to assemble the nation of Israel for the last days.
       3. Numbers 10:9-10

1. WHY - A STRATEGIC MOTIVE OF RESCUE, REUNION AND RECEPTION (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
   1. The rapture is a rescue.
      1. Before the Great Tribulation begins, God takes the church out.
      2. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
         1. Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come.
      3. 1 Thessalonians 5:9
         1. The church is not appointed to wrath.
         2. Before God declares war on this world, He will call His followers home.
   2. The rapture is a reunion.
      1. 1 Thessalonians 4:17
         1. We will be caught up together with our loved ones who have died in the Lord.
   3. The rapture is a reception.
      1. Jesus is coming to receive us to Himself.
      2. John 14:3
2. WHERE - IT WILL BE IN THE AIR (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
   1. The rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events.
      1. At the second coming, Jesus’ feet will touch upon the Mount of Olives, and He will reveal Himself in glory.
      2. The rapture will take place in the air and in secret.
   2. We are the bride of Christ and we will be carried away to a secluded place with our Lord.
   3. Song of Solomon 2:10
3. CONCLUSION
   1. The illustration of the big rocks by Stephen Covey.
      1. Is a jar full of big rocks full? No.
      2. Is that same jar full when you pour gravel in and fill it to the top? No.
      3. Is that same jar full when you pour sand in-between all the rocks? No.
      4. Is that same jar full when you pour water in and fill it to the top? Yes.
      5. What is the lesson?
         1. If he had not put the big rocks in first, he never would have gotten them in there at all.
   2. Some of us have allowed our lives to be filled with gravel and sand and water.
      1. The big rocks are: salvation, being right with God, being ready for Jesus to come again.
   3. We need to learn of His coming.
   4. We need to live for His coming.
   5. We need to long for the coming of Jesus Christ.
   6. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   7. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16