

Empty Cross: “Not Just Another Resurrection Day! Its Rapturous” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

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He is Risen” Jesus’ resurrection- well documented, over 500 individuals in the Greater Jerusalem saw him, in the weeks following. As well many eye witnesses, who testified to having touched him, and who eat with him, stand firm in testimony to establish this happening.

On this resurrection morning; I want us to consider other resurrections, possible our very own.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV)

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 forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The dead will be resurrected those who are alive will be changed in the twinkling of an eye: from a zombie existence of the living dead to glorified body, mind and spirit; a true Transformation.

This is one of the places where we are told of “the rapture”. Which takes place in conjunction with a resurrection of the righteous? While the actual word rapture is not in scripture the reality of the rapture- (being caught up in the air) is spelled out with certainty in scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52. — "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

So often we hear people use the expression, speaking of certainty, "the only thing certain in life is death and taxes," but death is by no means certain, it is not at all sure that we shall all die. Paul himself tells us we shall not all sleep, and he is speaking of death; some will be alive when the Lord comes back, and perhaps maybe some of us here today, shall be of this company. Others of you might not live through this sermon. And Uncle Sam has no jurisdiction on treasures in Heaven! When Paul was nearing the end of his remarkable ministry, he writes,

Philippians 3:9-11 that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

For I am not speaking of Christ resurrection so much this morning, for if you do not believe in his, then there is no hope in your mind of another, yours or others. So I speak this Resurrection Morn of those who long for his return so you will be bodily

resurrected or raptured on that glorious day and united together with saints from all ages in Christ.

As strange as this might seem outside of Hollywood, the walking once-dead, it is not completely unprecedented.

At Jesus' crucifixion recorded in Matthew 27:52

the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. (This was a mere foreshadowing of what is to come).

Have you heard the one about a farmer who had an old clock that was wacked? One night it struck 16 times. He woke up and said, wife get up, it is later than it ever has been before. This is TRUE as well CONCERNING THE COMING THE LORD[closer today than ever before in human history! Paul put it this way Romans 13:9-12"Love your neighbor as yourself. 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (The Day Is Near)

11 And do this(love neighbor), understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Let us look as earnestly for the upptaker as the undertaker!

This armor Paul is referring to is spelled out for us in Eph.6 the breastplate of Righteousness, Whose, certainly not our, the shield of Faith, the sword of the Spirit (word of truth), and the helmet of salvation. Let's look back over the Rom. passage who is going to wake from this slumber(death), who is going to realize the night is nearly over and day is almost here(that is who going to experience the coming back for the dead). Those who put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. In my counseling there is a term I often refer to "how's that working for you". Most people resist change, I have counseled with people who have deep, dark domestic problem and while they live in a constant circle of violence and emotional turmoil, they are more scared of change than they are of statuesque. Getting out of the dead status we have lived in takes make a change of custody. Rather than dyeing in our sins, while living for yourself, we must choose to die to sin and self and live for Christ and be raised from the dead, or changed in the air!

THIS LIFTING UP TO HEAVEN INVOLVES A PERSON:I THESS. 4:16 'THE LORD HIMSELF'-NOT YOURSELF

How exactly does this work? John 14 gives us great clarity. Jesus tells us in the first part of this chapter that after his resurrection he went to prepare a place for us. And that he will come back to bring us to be with him where he is. We know also that no corruption will enter the new heaven and earth that he has been preparing. So as previously described those who are dead/asleep in Christ will be resurrected with new bodies' incorruptible ones. And those who are still alive will be changed, them raptured up to meet Jesus and the saints receiving their new perfect bodies in the air.

Thus the not all will sleep, but all will be changed, if we, you and I are blessed to be alive when Christ returns in the air, we will not go as we are! So for those of you who want to believe that Christ will accept you just as you are and will not require change

in you here you are! While he very well will in no wise turn a repentant soul away, he will not receive one who will not be changed! The very word repentant denotes change; turning from sin and self-interest to God and God alone. Ask yourself, do you want to be saved from you sin, or just the consequences (penalty) of your sins. Do you want God to give you what you desire-or do you want him to give you desires of your heart that line parallel to his very own. The answer to these questions reveal to you whether or not Christ is alive in you, and whether or not you will come to live with Christ and experience eternal life.

Thus the saying you cannot go with God and stay where you are. In this Series EMPTY: today we're talking about the empty cross, but wait, there's more empty graves too! Because of His empty cross 2k years ago we are looking for a day of empty houses, cars, plains, shoes and hopefully empty churches!

In order for BBC to be emptied at the first coming of the Lord it must be full of converted souls. One of the words used as a synonym for converted/transformed is renewed. God is not getting rid of the old mankind and creating man again, He is renewing us to the original image that he created us in.

Gen. 1: 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Just looking around the earth today, do you see anyone who is ready to rule over God's creation: fish of the sea, birds of the air, livestock, do you see a man or women who looks more like our Holy God then fallen Man?

He is risen; this is certain-will we rise to meet him, that is the question? If we give him who we are, it does not yet appear what that may look like but we now that when he appears we will be like him. If that is not what you want, then stop hanging out at his place (church), stop wanting to go to heaven. Because everyone there will look like Father. I want to be like him-phrase things like him, expose fakes, run off phonies and nurture family. If you love me He said-obey me!!!!