

**Empire Church of the Brethren**  
*Sunday Service Sermons*

**21 April 2024**

God With Us

Text: "For God had not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him."

*1 Thess. 5:10*

Paul had been in Thessalonica only a short while.

While there he taught the believers about the triumphant return of Christ, but some questions went unanswered.

People were concerned that their departed loved ones would miss the glory of the Lord's return, so Paul wrote to comfort them.

His message contains powerful truth about death and life.

Imagine the Thessalonians as they look in four directions.

Looking down.

The Thessalonians stood looking down at the graves of departed loved ones.

They were encouraged not to "grieve as others do who have no hope".

This passage gives two New Testament views of death.

The last enemy.

Death entered the world because of sin; and death is the last enemy to be destroyed.

The reality of death's defeat came when Jesus died.

Paul said, "We believe that Jesus died," in reference to his death on the cross.

"The wages of sin is death", and on the cross Jesus paid the consequences of our sin.

Jesus experienced all the horror of death; and as a result, death for the Christian becomes the transition into the Lord's presence.

Asleep in Jesus.

A common New Testament description of death is "sleep."

This does not refer to "soul-sleep," but reflects an absence of fear in the Christian's attitude toward death.

The grave is the entrance into eternal life with Jesus Christ.

What a contrast between the way a Christian and an unbeliever face death.

(Story of the undertaker who became a believer because of the difference in the corpses with which he worked)

The unbeliever has no hope; the Christian is with Jesus.

Paul spoke of death as being absent from the body . . . Present with the Lord.

Looking up.

Because of Jesus, Paul urges the Thessalonians to turn their eyes from the grave to the sky.

"God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep . . . For the Lord himself will descend from heaven."

Alexander Maclaren said, "We are not looking for the undertaker but the upper taker, for a cleavage in the sky instead of a hole in the ground."

This hope is declared by the word of the Lord who does not lie.

The Lord's descent.

"The Lord himself" will return.

The disciples watched the Lord ascend into glory and were told, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come."

The word for his "coming" is *parousia*, used in the Greek for the parade of a returning king.

What a great day!

Jesus will return to consummate his plan for humankind.

The Lord's victory.

Jesus will come with a cry of command.

This is the word an officer shouts to his troops.

Christ will return as conqueror.

We will "meet the Lord in the air", where Satan has ruled as prince, and Christ will have complete victory over evil.

Looking in.

Beware of speculation.

There is no need to try and calculate the time of the Lord's return.

Plotting a prophetic calendar is a waste of time, because the Lord will return suddenly, "like a thief in the night."

Be ready.

The New Testament usually couples the Lord's return with an emphasis on preparation.

We are to walk in the light and be ready whenever the Lord comes.

Be ready with faith, love, and salvation.

The hope of Christ's return purifies the Christian.

Looking out.

Win the lost.

The Lord's coming is delayed in order that more might be ready.

God's will is for all to "obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

While we wait, we are to work in the fields, which are white unto harvest.

Encourage the saved.

This time between Christ's ascension and his return is a time to build up the church.

Look out for others in the fellowship.

Jesus has put a new face on death and has given us abundant life.

While we wait for his victorious return, we will work to win the world.

In Christ, death has been defeated once and for all time for those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Lord of their life.

We all face death of the life we know.

It is a reality for all living humans.

Each of us will face death of this life before we get to see Jesus in his glory.

The book of Hebrews says that death is inescapable.

God has ordained that all people die.

No one of any age or status is exempt.

Death has a spiritual dimension.

We all know about physical death.

We experience it when we lose a loved one.

There is also spiritual death.

This death is the separation of us from God.

That is the death that came by sin in the garden, this is the death Adam and Eve experienced the moment they did eat of the forbidden fruit.

As Paul says in *Ephesians 2:1*, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins."

Sin separates us from God.

Until we receive his forgiveness, we are alienated from him.

We can be alive physically but dead spiritually.

Then there is eternal death.

Dying without Christ is a state of eternal death.

Separated from God for all time.

This is the second death as we find in Revelation.

The worst thing about Hell is being separated from God.

But death has been defeated by Christ.

The cure for death was the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Christ's resurrection proved that he is the victor over death and that there is life beyond the end of life here on earth.

Some time ago a Christian was talking to a Muslim.

In his witness the Christian said, "We believe that God has revealed himself through the book that is called the Bible."

The Muslim replied, "We believe that God has revealed himself through the book that is called the Koran."

The Christian said, "We believe that God has revealed himself climactically through Jesus Christ."

The Muslim said, "We believe too that God has revealed himself through a man. His name is Mohammed."

The Christian said, "We believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins."

The Muslim said, "We believe that Mohammed died for the benefit of this followers."

The Christian said, "We believe that Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the third day."

The Muslim bowed his head for a moment and thought seriously.

Then he raised his eyes and said, "We do not know what happened to our religious leader after his death."

Jesus Christ is the only founder of a world religion who died and rose from the grave.

The resurrection of Christ gives victory in the midst of struggle.

He gives hope in the world of darkness.

He gives meaning to life.

He takes the sting out of death and gives confidence in the face of death.

May each of us trust Christ and experience the results of his promises.

Now and forevermore.

Amen!