

Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Message

He Is Making All Things New

How do you respond when you realize that there is a BIG DAY coming! Maybe you are expecting guests? Maybe you are invited to a wedding or a Party with friends? Whatever the Big Day is, I'm sure that you have a routine that you would follow to get ready for the BIG DAY. Cleaning. Making sure the outfit you want to wear is cleaned and ready. Preparing food if you will be the host. You will want to be ready. And hopefully you will not wait till the last minute to make your preparations for the BIG DAY. I want to talk today about a BIG DAY that is coming.

Last weekend, the title of my message was **The Urgency of TODAY**. I emphasized the importance of living our lives with an attitude of Urgency. Urgency is a force that Constrains us to do something. We cannot afford to be Complacent or Passive about the important matters of life. We must not **put off important decisions**, thinking that we will always have more time.

Perhaps some will ask the question "WHY?" What's the big deal. Why the sense of Urgency? I suggested in last Sunday's message that the answer to the WHY question, is because there is a Big Day Coming. Throughout the Bible we read about a day when God will suddenly intervene in Human History. It is sometimes called the Day of the Lord. It refers to a time when God will ACT to bring about His purpose and plan for a world that has been marred and ruined by sin. In Revelation 21:5 we read ⁵ **He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"** Douglas Moo writes: **"The story of the Bible is the story of the way our sovereign and loving God is making everything new."** In the New Testament, we learn that this work of making everything new began with the first coming of Jesus – when he was born to a virgin, in the city of David. He taught about the Kingdom of God, and He called people to follow Him to be a part of this work that God was doing in the world – this work of making **everything new**. While we believe that God's work of making everything new began with the coming of Jesus, there is still much to be accomplished. Theologians say that we live with an **"Already/Not Yet"** mindset. Much has **Already** been fulfilled. But His work is **Not Yet** finished. When will this Big Day come when God will finish His work of making everything new? We do not know when. Only God knows. There are many passages that inform us that we do not know when this Big Day will come. And so **we must be ready before that Day arrives..**

What is going to Happen on this Big Day? This Day is sometimes referred to as the Consummation. Meriam Webster Dictionary says that one of the definitions of Consummation is: **the ultimate end : FINISH**. When we use the word Consummation as Christians, we are talking about the end times or the Last Day when God will finish His work of making everything new. The New Testament teaches that we are living in the Last Days when God brings to an end this age and this world. When Jesus came to earth, he ushered in the **Last Days**, the Last AGE of human history. But there is a **Last Day** that will bring to an end life as we know it. When the Bible talks about the Last Day, or the End Times there are several events that are included.

- **The Return of Christ**
- **The Resurrection**
- **The Judgment**
- **The Establishment of the New Heaven and the New Earth**

These events do not all occur at once, but they are all a part of the End Times of the Consummation. I want to take some time over the next few weeks to talk about these specific events, what they mean, and how we need to live in light of these events that will come to pass. I think that many people get obsessed about figuring out timelines and sequences and when all these things are going to happen. Jesus specifically tells us not to do that. But it is important that we know about these things. AND it is important that our discussion of these events has a practical purpose.

We will begin with a study regarding the Second Coming or the Return of Christ. **The Return of Christ is the event that sets in motion this work of God in bringing about the Consummation.** There are many references in the New Testament to the return of Christ. Jesus mentions it many times in his teaching. Paul writes about it often, Peter and John both write about it in their writings.

It is referred to as the **Blessed Hope** of Believers:

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11-15)

The coming of Christ is our **HOPE** as believers. History is not plodding along and someday the world will blow up and time will end. History is moving toward an event. We as believers look forward to that event. It is our **HOPE**. Paul refers to the coming of Jesus several times in his letters to the Thessalonians. I want to look specifically at this passage that I read earlier. Paul was aware of some who were grieving because of loved ones who had died. It appears that they were fearful that those who died were going to miss out when Jesus comes back. But Paul assures him that that is not the case.

As Paul writes, He does not want the Thessalonians to live as people who have no **HOPE**. When we have hope we will not be overwhelmed or discouraged about current conditions. It doesn't mean that we don't care, or that we don't work to bring about change in our world. But we approach life with a sense of optimism that things will turn out good. The basis for our hope for those who have died is first of all in the Resurrection of Jesus – vs. 14. **We believe that Jesus died and rose again.** Jesus has conquered death and he shares that victory over death with those who have died in Him. The **second basis for this hope is the Word of Jesus** (vs. 15). The hope of his coming is not based on some whim that someone dreamed up, or some “secret” knowledge. It is based on the word of the Lord Himself! As I mentioned Jesus speaks about his return several times in his ministry.

Now, what about those believers who have died. Paul says that when Jesus returns, he will bring with him those **believers** in him who have died. That is an important point to note. This **Blessed Hope** is for the benefit of Believers – those who have chosen to make Jesus their Savior. Those who have rejected Him, or refused to submit to Him will not be included in this event. His coming will not benefit those who have rejected Him, or refused to believe in Him.

The picture here is that the souls of believers who have died have gone to be with Jesus where He is. Their spirits left their bodies which have decayed and have been with the Lord. When Jesus comes back, the bodies of those who have been with him in heaven will be re-created, and resurrected. This is what the Bible refers to as the First Resurrection. The bodies of believers who have died, will be reunited with their spirits and they will be restored to the way God intended for them to live with Him. Then those who have not yet died will be changed. In 1 Corinthians 15:51, Paul says: **⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** We will then rise to meet Jesus in the air, to accompany Him back to earth, where he will establish his reign in this world. This was an image that would have been familiar to those in Paul's day. When a benevolent ruler is coming to visit a city, the citizens would go out to meet him and accompany him into his city.

The text tells us that the return of Jesus will be noticeable. It will not be some secret disappearance of believers, but rather it will be a public event accompanied by the voice of the arch angel and the trumpet call of God. The world will finally see and know the truth about Jesus.

Paul continues his discussion about the Return of Christ in the next chapter (5). **“Now, brothers and sisters about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”** We talk about the return of Christ being an event that is Imminent. That means it could happen at any moment. Many people will be caught off guard, will be unprepared for his return, just as they would be surprised by a thief's attack, so they will be surprised by the appearance of Jesus. But

Paul goes on to say: ***But you brothers, are not in the darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day.*** We may not know the day or the hour of his coming, but we can be prepared to meet him.

What then are the benefits of the Second Coming of Jesus? Why is it called a Blessed Hope?

- It is a blessed Hope because it offers us **assurance about loved ones who have died**. The spirits of our loved ones have been with Jesus and when he comes back they will come with him! They have not been sleeping. Their bodies may be said to be sleeping, but their spirits are alive and with the Lord, and when he comes back their bodies will be resurrected and joined with their spirits again.
- It is a **blessed Hope** because when he comes back we will be forever with the Lord, never again fearing our death or hell
- It is a **blessed Hope** because the wrongs done to us because of our faith will be avenged. ***⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7)***
- Finally it is a **Blessed Hope** because the assurance that Jesus is coming back gives us an incentive to live a godly life. ***¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the **blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,** Titus 1:12-13***

Jesus promised his followers the night before his death ***“I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:3)***

Jesus is Coming! Are you getting ready for that Big Day that’s coming! Amen