

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

(E. W. Bullinger; The Church Epistles; written in 1900)

(When quoting scriptures, from the Rotherham Emphasized Bible New Testament, I will substitute the Hebrew words Yahoshua (yeh-ho-shoo'-ah) for Jesus, Yahweh and Elohim for God and the LORD and ruah for pneuma (spirit).)

"But we do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are falling asleep,—lest ye be sorrowing, even as the rest also, who are without hope; For, if we believe that, Yahoshua, died, and rose again, so, also will, Yahweh, bring forth with him, them who have fallen asleep through Yahoshua; For, this, unto you, do we say, by a word of the Lord,—that, we, the living who are left unto the Presence of the Lord, shall in nowise get before them who have fallen asleep; Because, the Lord himself, with a word of command, with a chief-messenger's voice, and with a trumpet of Yahweh, shall descend from heaven,—and, the dead in Christ, shall rise, first, After that, we, the living who are left, together with them, shall be caught away, in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:—and, thus, evermore, with the Lord, shall we be! So then, be consoling one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:13-18). (Rotherham Emphasized Bible)

Instruction was necessary as to those who had been taken away by death. The Thessalonian saints were "ignorant" as to what takes place after death, as all would have been had not Yahweh, who alone can know, seen fit to reveal it to us.

As formerly heathen, they had been either Platonists or Epicureans; and, if Jews, then either Pharisees or Sadducees.

The former (Platonists and Pharisees) believed that no one died: death being merely life in another form. Indeed, this is the popular belief of the day: but those who hold it do not see that it does away with, and denies the necessity of resurrection.

The latter (the Epicureans and Sadducees) believed that death was death, and that every one who died had died eternally. These denied the doctrine of the resurrection altogether.

Holding one of these two creeds, these saints were, therefore, "ignorant;" and were, of course, much concerned about their friends who had died; fearing, not that they had gone before, but would be left behind, and have no part with those who were alive and remained to the coming of the Lord. Therefore it is written: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as the others that have no hope."

All is shown to depend, and to turn, on the resurrection of the Lord Yahoshua. "If we believe" that, then there is another great truth that we are to believe in consequence. There is something built upon this great foundation: "Even so." But to see what it is we must understand the scope of this fourteenth verse.

It is the hope of Resurrection at the coming of the Lord Yahoshua Christ. Thus we are taught that like as "the Elohim of peace brought again from the dead (Heb. xiii. 20) the Lord Yahoshua," even so we are to believe that Yahweh, in like manner, will bring again from the dead those who are fallen asleep in Christ (1 Cor. 15:23).

Who is it that will bring the sleeping saints again from the dead?

"Yahweh," according to John 5:21.

By what agency will Yahweh bring them?

"Through or by Yahoshua," according to John 5:25, "the Son of Yahweh."

In what manner will Yahweh bring them?

"In resurrection, as He brought again the Lord Yahoshua from the dead."

But then follows a further revelation as to when this glorious event will take place.

1. We which are alive "shall in no wise get before them that are fallen asleep" (R.V.).
2. This must carry with it the correlative fact that those who have fallen asleep can in no wise get before those who are alive and shall remain to the Lord's coming. Otherwise language for the express purpose of removing ignorance is useless. For the words cannot mean that some shall not get before others who are already there.

Then, if we shall not get before them, nor they get before us, how will that affect the hope of resurrection? The answer given reveals the fact that the first thing that will happen in connection with the realisation of our "blessed hope" is that

a) The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, ((keleusma) an assembling shout of command)¹ and with an archangel's voice, and with a trumpet of Yahweh.

b) The next thing that takes place is "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (i.e., before anything happens to us); and note that they are called the "dead," though "the dead in Christ." And they "rise."

c) After that, we, the living, who remain, "shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The word "together" is hama, and is used of two distinct companies, and denotes at the same time.

d) And thus shall we be evermore with the Lord.

And, because the Thessalonica's possessed this blessed hope, they "waited for Yahweh's Son from heaven."

Now, what we must so particularly notice is that, we have here a new revelation. "By the Word of the Lord" denotes a special prophetic message, the revelation of a truth which had never before been known. The promise of the Lord had been, of the spirit, "It shall show you things to come." Where has it shown them if not here? The Lord had many things to say, but He could not say them when on earth (John 16:25). When, then, has He said them at all, if not in these special revelations to the churches? This is truth affecting only the Assemblies of Yahweh. It is church-truth of the highest kind. But the churches

¹ 2752 κελευσμα keleuma *kel'-yoo-mah* an order, command,

today do not want it! They can do without it. They are all going to die, and are waiting for death—and singing about it every Sunday in most of their hymns. They have invented their own way of being with the Lord quite apart from resurrection,

They are hoping to be with Him without rising from the dead: but the Lord has postponed the fulfillment of all His promises to His people concerning their entrance on the coming glory until He returns and awakes His dead, and takes them up with His living saints to Himself. We are expressly told that it is "by patience, and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). But this "comfort" is not enough for people today: and yet the greatest comfort which the great Comforter Himself gave to two bereaved sisters was—"Thy brother shall rise again." This agrees with the special injunction here added—"Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:18)."

"The teaching of Yahoshua," is the cry of the day, but an essential part of that teaching is rejected, for He held out the blessed hope, "I will come again and receive you to Myself." But the reply is practically "No! Lord, Thou needest not come for me. I will die and come to Thee." And, instead of a belief in Christ's teaching, a new Creed altogether has been formulated. "I believe in . . . the reception of believers by Yahoshua in the hour of death."² In this Creed there is no reference beyond this whatsoever, either to Resurrection, or to the Lord's coming! So complete is the present apostasy!³

Of course, all this makes no difference. They will not get this "reception by Yahoshua" any sooner. Not until the Lord's own time which He has appointed.

But it makes a great difference in another way. It makes a great difference now, and here. For, through this ignorance, which the Lord would not have His People to be in, and which they persist in remaining in, they lose the present power for a holy life, and they lose the present power for diligent service. And this is the true and only explanation of the vast difference between the churches of today and this typical, model "church of the Thessalonians."

Christians today go even so far as to say that "Paul was mistaken": and this, notwithstanding his inspiration from Yahoshua Christ⁴ to record this revelation for us to learn (not to reject). No! he was not mistaken. The holy lives of these Thessalonian saints, and their missionary spirit and zeal and activity and success show us that they were not mistaken. The low standard of Christian life today and the fictitious standards of missionary effort show us that there is a mistake somewhere. But it was not in the model church of Thessalonica; it is in the churches of the present day, with all their worldliness, and, their unspirituality of life and walk.

² Professor George H. Gilbert, D.D., Chicago Theological Seminary, on "The Apostle's Creed revised by the teaching of Jesus, in the *Biblical World*, Sept., 1898.

³ It is this popular belief that makes many teachers inclined to take up and dabble with Spiritism. It is thus a dangerous snare, and a ready door to many other errors, such as "Prayers for the dead," the "larger hope," the worship of the Virgin Mary, &c , &c. All these doors are dosed if *Resurrection* be the one great and only hope; as it is, at the coming of Christ.

⁴ For neither, from man, did I accept it, nor was taught *it*, —but through a revealing of Yahoshua Christ. (Gal. 1:12)