

# What do you think?

- What three topics are the most controversial among Christians?
  1. The beginning
  2. The end
  3. Anything in between



*Paul's Letter to the  
Church at Thessalonica*



# I Thessalonians

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# *Steadfastness of Hope*

1 Thess. 4:13-18

# The Setting

- “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”



# The Setting

- *Asleep*: dead believers (see v. 15)
  - Cemetery -> *a sleeping place; dormitory*
  - Death is *unnatural* (consequence - Gen. 2:17) and is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26)
  - Jesus experienced death on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:14-15) and will utterly defeat it (1 Cor. 15:54-57)



# The Setting

- Their big question:
  - “Will those who have died miss out on the experience of Christ’s return?”
  - They were waiting for Jesus to come back (1:10)
  - They were expecting it at any moment



# The Setting

- Confused by pagan beliefs?
  - No offer of hope beyond physical death
- OT stories?
  - Most 'rested with their fathers'
  - Elijah was alive when taken up (2 Kings 2)



# The Setting

- In 4:13-18
  - Paul is answering their question, not giving a full explanation
  - He is leaving out a lot of information
  - This is one small piece to a large puzzle that we will not put together today





# 1 Thess. 4:13-18

1. The Fact of the Resurrection
2. The Order of the Rapture
3. The Comfort of the Remaining



# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- If we believe

- Better: *since we believe* (i.e. – “if this is true, and it is, ...”)

- That Jesus died and rose again

- *Jesus* – emphasizes His humanity

- Died and rose – central to the gospel



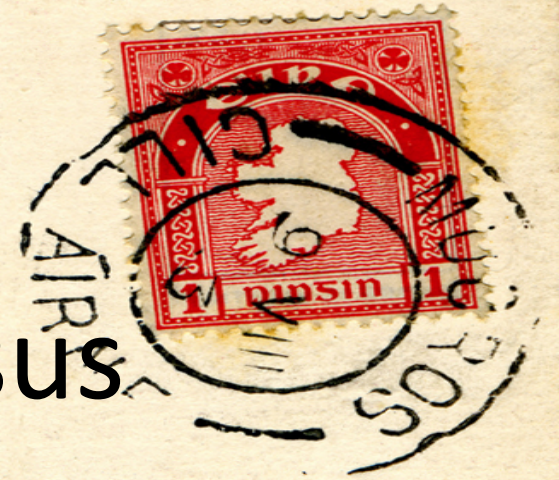
# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- Jesus did it (1 Cor. 15)
  - Jesus literally died and rose physically (according to the Scriptures) (3-4)
    - The faith rests on this truth! (12-19)
- God will one day physically change believers to be like Jesus (50-57)



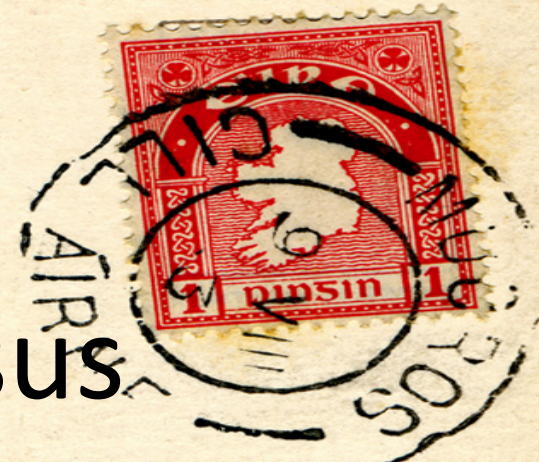
# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- God will bring the dead with Jesus
  - Up to heaven?
  - Disembodied souls? (cf. Rev. 6:9-11)
    - Unnatural state (cf. Gen. 2:7)
    - Present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-10)
    - Need to be clothed (2 Cor. 5:4)



# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- God will bring the dead with Jesus
  - The immaterial aspect of believers who die goes to be with the Lord immediately upon death (2 Cor. 5:4)
  - They long to be *clothed* with a new resurrection body (cf. Rom. 8:23)



# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- God will bring the dead with Jesus
  - Their bodies will be resurrected at the rapture and they will be (re)united with their (new) bodies (see Phil. 3:20-21)
  - This is one of several resurrections
    - Cf. Matt. 27:52-53; Rev. 20:4-6



# 1. The Fact of the Resurrection

- By the word of the Lord
  - Not recorded in the gospels
- By His authority
  - Believe it! Bank on it!



## 2. The Order of the Rapture

- *We, the living, the remaining*
  - Does Paul include himself in this?





IN CHRIST

Those who have  
fallen asleep

The living,  
the remaining

“We”



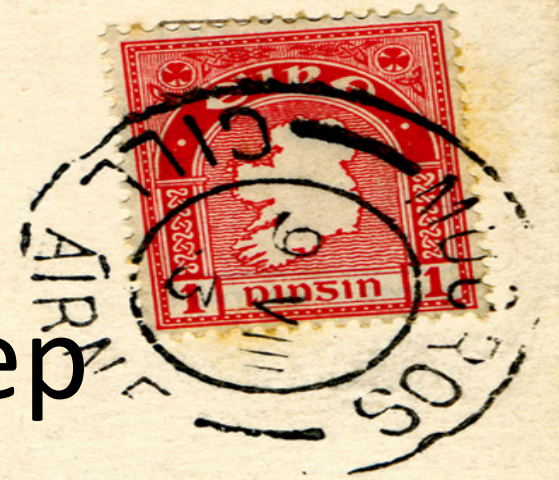
## 2. The Order of the Rapture

- *We, the living, the remaining*
  - *Imminent* – nothing necessary before it happens (but other things *may* happen)
  - They were waiting for Jesus! (1:10)
    - “The present tense speaks of daily watchfulness and expectation.”



## 2. The Order of the Rapture

- Will not precede those who sleep
  - Emphatic – “*in no way!*”
  - The living have no advantage
  - In fact, the dead [bodies] will rise first
    - Those who come *with* Jesus will receive their resurrected bodies before the living are changed (1 Cor. 15:52)



## 2. The Order of the Rapture

- We will *all* be changed
  - Imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:53)
  - We will be like Him (1 John 3:2-3)
    - What is that like? See Luke 24:36-43
    - Apologetics – truly physical!



## 2. The Order of the Rapture

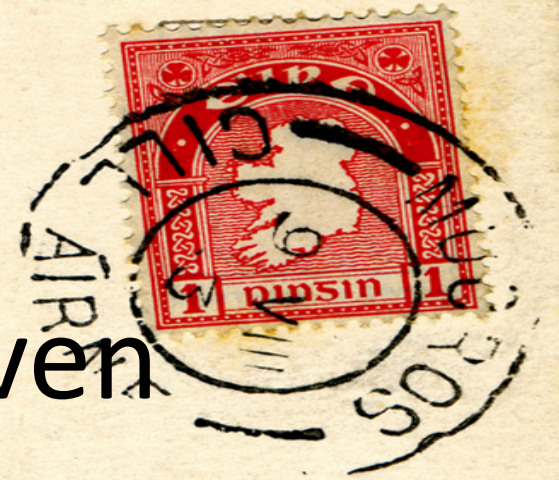
### 1. The signal from heaven

- A shout of command
- A sound from the archangel
- A trumpet of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52)
  - All 3 ambiguous as to who is doing what



## 2. The Order of the Rapture

2. The Lord will come from heaven
3. The dead [bodies] will rise first
4. Then the living will be caught up with them in the clouds
5. We will together meet Christ in the air
6. And so we shall always be with the Lord



### 3. The Comfort of the Remaining

- Comfort one another
  - *Exhort, encourage (compel forward)*
  - “Remind one another of what is true and encourage one another to live it out.”
  - Our grieving should be informed by truth



### 3. The Comfort of the Remaining

- Comfort one another
  - As believers, we have hope
  - *Sleeping* believers will not miss out
  - “And so we shall always be with the Lord”
    - For all eternity!





# The Answer

- Their big question:

- “Will those who have died miss out on the experience of Christ’s return?”

- His answer:

- “By no means! In fact, they will experience something the living won’t.”



## So What?

- Grieve with hope/understanding
- Comfort those who grieve
- Wait expectantly for Christ's return
- Live in light of His return
  - 1 Cor. 15:58; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:2-3



So What?

1 Cor. 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

