

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith  
Audio Script - January 09, 2009

What happens to our body and spirit after we die? Such questions have plagued the minds of people since the beginning of time, including the early believers in Thessalonica. Paul addressed these important questions in today's Templates of Truth, taken from I Thessalonians, chapter four.

Paul had taught the Church at Thessalonica specific doctrine concerning future events surrounding the second coming of Jesus Christ. He spoke about the Rapture of the Church and the rise to power of the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period. The same persecution that drove Paul out of Thessalonica had obviously been turned against these faithful believers as well. Some were confused into thinking that they were actually experiencing the Tribulation at that time, and that they had missed the Rapture. They were particularly concerned about what this meant for their loved ones who had already died.

Paul began his response to this confusion by telling them, *we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope* (I Thessalonians 4:13). In this statement, Paul does not mean that we should not grieve the passing of our loved ones, but establishes a difference between the way a Christian grieves and the way a non-Christian grieves. That difference is *hope* – the hope that is contained in the assurance of eternity in heaven with God. That hope dictates that as believers in Christ, we will see our loved ones once again in heaven.

Jesus revealed a clear distinction in the makeup of man when He said, *that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit* (John 3:6). When Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit, He said, *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:17). James further helps our understanding when he declares, *the body without the spirit is dead* (James 2:26). When Paul teaches about these two distinctions, he reveals, *while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord* (II Corinthians 5:6-8). This New Testament truth affirms the teaching of Solomon in Ecclesiastes: *the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it* (12:7). All these passages simply mean that when Christians die, our body is buried in the ground, but our spirit immediately moves into the presence of God in heaven.

Since the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit has transformed our human spirit into readiness for heaven, our human body must also be transformed into that which is appropriate for God's presence in eternity, *because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (I Corinthians 15:50). As Paul teaches, that transformation happens at the time of the Rapture: *we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep...the dead in Christ shall rise first* (I Thessalonians 5:15-16). It will be an instantaneous event: *we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For the perishable*

*must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality* (I Corinthians 15:51-53). That is when our bodies are raised to unite with our spirits once again in the creation of glorified bodies fit for heavenly residence. Furthermore, even though Christians may endure suffering and persecution in this life, Paul assures us that we will be spared the trauma of Tribulation judgment as Christ raptures His Church into heaven. This dramatic truth was a comfort to the believers at Thessalonica, and continues to be a comfort to those of us who hope in Christ today. Current world conditions and events proclaim like never before in the history of time that the Rapture is imminent and very, very near!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible Teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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