Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning, February 25, 2018

 ***The Last Days!***  What happens next?

Life Lessons from Four Apostles

When Christ Returns

Will all believers share in God’s Kingdom blessings?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

 As the Apostle Paul encourages us to look past our present trials and forward to the return of Jesus, a question comes to mind: What happens if I die before He returns? Will I miss out? And what about those who already have died before us? Will they not share in the glories of Christ’s Kingdom?

***There is no need to despair over departed loved ones, as do those whose confidence is in this life. . .*** v. 13

 This “hope” is not one of questioning and doubt, but anticipation of God keeping His promises. God does not want us to remain ignorant of His plans, but freely shares much about the future. Ephesians 2:11-13

***Why? Because all those “in Christ” (having believed) will return with Him, the Resurrected One!***  v. 14

 Paul’s favorite description of believers is that they are “in Christ.” This means that what happens to Him happens to all who believe. Baptism is the picture, or dramatic re-enactment of our identification with Him in His death AND resurrection. When He returns, so will believers who have died. He is the “first fruits” of the resurrection, and those who died in Him are with Him. Romans 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

***Jesus Himself has told us what to expect:***  vv. 15–17

 –Being alive when He returns will not give you an advantage!

 Because:

 –When He appears publicly (with shout, angel, and trumpet), . . .

 –The dead in Christ will rise to meet Him, joined by those still alive.

–From that time onward, all of His people will be with Him as one.

***So now we can use these reminders for mutual comfort***. v. 18

 This scene is the same as in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58: resurrection at Jesus’ return at the blast of a trumpet. The difference is the “mystery,” “We shall be changed.” Jesus had not explained that reality, so First Corinthians 15 tells just *how* the body is fitted for heaven.

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***Last Days Life Lesson***

***Because Jesus’ resurrection guarantees that we will be reunited with our departed loved ones at His return,***

***we have every reason to comfort and be comforted in our grief.***

 ***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. How is Paul’s use of the word “hope” different from our normal use? How is this hope different from wishful thinking or “luck”?

2. If Jesus brings dead believers with Him, where are they now? How is this comforting? How should we, and how can we, comfort one another? How/why do some comfort attempts fall short?

3. If Jesus’ return comes with an angel, a loud shout, and a trumpet blast, why do you think some call this a “secret” appearance?