

Now, Paul recognizes that this question in the minds of the Thessalonians is a very serious question because it is causing them to be grieved and to sorrow so that their grief and their sorrow is tending toward the same type of hopelessness that characterizes the unbelievers who, in fact, have no hope. So, Paul says I do not want you to be like those unbelievers. I do not want you to be grieving and sorrowing as those people who have no hope. Let me tell you exactly what the relationship shall be of those who have been lulled to sleep in Jesus and His Second Coming and establishment of the kingdom. He makes his declaration in the concluding phrase of verse 14 when he says, "Even so them also who sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him." So, Paul's declaration is very simple. He has completely answered their question. The answer is that when Jesus returns God will bring with Him those who have slept in Christ. They shall return to the earth with Him and they shall share in the kingdom and they shall see all of the glories of His kingdom reign. That is the answer that Paul offers to the Thessalonians. When He returns to the earth and establishes His kingdom, they shall be with Him and they shall see the glory of the millennial kingdom and they shall share with Him in that glorious millennial reign.

- He has answered their question. Only, of course, to raise a hundred other questions. How can it all take place? What will be the sequence of events? They have died, but how shall they come back with Him? So, in order to explain how this shall take place, Paul gives us his explanation in verses 15 through 17. It is in this explanation that he tells us the sequence of events, the course of events that shall take place whereby those who sleep in Jesus shall, indeed, come back with Him. The explanation, then, is covered in verses 15 through 17. I think we can divide the explanation in two. In verse 15, you have a general statement. Then, in verses 16 and 17, you have the explanation in detail. Let us look at his explanation in general in verse 15. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," so he introduces His explanation with this statement that what he is about now to tell us is by the word of the Lord. "This, we say unto you, by the word of the Lord," and anyone, of course, who is a reader of the Old Testament scriptures just revels in a phrase like that because the entire connotation of that phrase is that this is a direct revelation that is given by God to the prophet. We read it all through the prophetic books. The word of the Lord came to... and he stood up and he preached. "And the word of the Lord came upon," and he delivered the message. Paul says what I am about to tell you, the sequence of events that I am about to explore, the revelation that I am about to give to you has come by a direct revelation from God. This we speak unto you by the word of the Lord.

✧ The second thing he gives us in his general statement in verse 15 is that the living saints at the time of the coming of our Lord shall not precede them who are asleep. That is, he is simply telling us that the translation of the living saints shall not precede the resurrection of the dead saints. Now, that is a very important thing for these Thessalonians to realize. If the translation of the living saints preceded the resurrection of the dead saints then it suggested that the dead saints may miss out on the advent to the earth and the establishment of the kingdom. Paul says no such thing is possible and the reason why it could never happen is because the resurrection will take place before the translation. Those who sleep in Jesus shall be raised before those who are alive at that time shall be translated to meet Him. So, in the general statement in verse 15, then, he has said two things. He has told us that what he is going to give