

1Thess. 4:13-5:10: The Rapture before Christ's Second Coming.

This passage describes the rapture and hint on the timing that it is certainly pre-tribulation.

Summaries of relevant background of the passage:

1Thess. 4:13-5:10: In 1Thess. 4, Paul is instructing the believers on how they ought to walk and please God (**4:1**), namely to abstain from sexual immorality (**4:3-8**) and to excel in brotherly love (**4:9-12**). As they walk with God, they are also waiting for Christ's return. The present issue is over some believers dying, while waiting for His return. It is causing them grief.

Explaining the passage:

1. Explaining how those who died will still participate in Christ's return. 13-18: There is a question regarding His return in **4:13**. Paul has already taught them that Christ will return as evident in **5:1-2**. However, for believers who die before His return, depicted by the euphemism asleep, will they lose out in this great event? It is such a concern that they are even grieving over it. Paul's answer is in **4:14** that as sure as Christ is resurrected, God will bring these believers who have died, *to come with Him on His return*. "Bring" in Greek is "ago" - it means to bring them as a group. This is what the Thessalonians are uninformed in **4:13** and so Paul now explains to them this vital truth. But how can Christ bring all of them with Him on His return? The solution is in **4:15-18**, for there will be an event when dead believers will be resurrected to meet Christ in mid-air, together with the living believers, who will be caught up in the air after them (**16-17**). It is a different event from Christ's return, when His feet will stand on the earth (**Zech. 14:4**) and not in mid-air. This new event has a label - rapture. Still, it is postulated that we could meet Him in mid-air and then descend to earth with Him on that same day of His return. It is not possible because of **5:1-3**, in which the rapture is linked with the Day of the Lord. Moreover it will come like a thief in the night (see **Matt. 24:42-43**). In contrast, Christ's return is predicted to come just after the Great Tribulation (**Matt. 24: 21; 29-30**) and its timing can be predicted. The Day of the Lord begins with the rapture and ends with the end of Millennium; so the beginning is unpredictable. Consequently, this new revelation by Paul on the rapture solidifies the message of **5:1-2**. The rapture can happen anytime and hence the Day of the Lord will come definitely like a thief at night, unannounced.

The fact that the living believers will have bodily change with the believers who have been dead is supported by **1 Cor 15:51-52**. In **1 Cor 15**, Paul contended that resurrection is real, and affirmed Corinthians that all believers will be resurrected, refuting the heresy in the Corinthian church at that time (cf. **1 Cor 15:12**). In **1 Cor 15:50-59**, he concluded his discussion by revealing what will happen at the moment of resurrection. At that moment, there will be a trumpet sounded (**1 Cor 15:52**). Paul said that **not all the believers will die, but all will have bodily change (1 Cor 15:51)**, which matches what he said in **1 Th 4:13-18**. As the resurrection of the dead and the bodily change of living believers will surely happen at the same time, so will the rapture.

2. A charge to be ready for the Day of the Lord. 5:1-10

In **1:9-10**, Paul refers to them as a model church that turns from idols to wait for Christ's return. This is a gentile church as Jews will not be worshiping idols. He ends the letter with instructions on how to wait as God's holy community.

5:1-10 seems to be a continuation of the section in **4:13-18** but there are some distinct differences. In the previous section, Paul is answering a question over believers who died but the instructions here are for those alive and are waiting for Christ's coming. This is the focus of the chapter as it also ends with a benediction on His return (**23**). Paul starts with the issue on the timing of His return (**1-3**). Unlike the previous section, no special revelation such as on the rapture is needed for Paul had already instructed them on the subject. "The day of the Lord" refers to the period when the Lord will directly intervene and consummate His redemption. It comes like a thief meaning that it will be sudden and unpredictable. The period includes Christ's return but other passages show that within it is also the tribulation (**Joel 2:8-3:6; 2 Thess. 2:2**) and it would terminate at the end of the present world (**2 Peter 3:10**). In this section, it is discussed after the rapture in 4:16-18, suggesting that this is when it begins. This harmonizes well, for many details on "the day of Lord" are in the Bible such as in Revelation, making them predictable once the period starts. **It is the beginning, just after the rapture that is unpredictable.** Thus, we must always be alert (**4-8**). The key is to fully control ourselves and in v8 to have faith, love and hope, the three great Christian virtues. It simply means to actively walk with Christ, for we are destined to live with Him, whether alive or dead, either here or in eternity (**9-10**).

帖撒羅尼迦前書 4:13-5:10: 主再來前的被提

這段經文描述了被提的情況，並暗示了它會發生在大災難之前。

經文相關背景的總結：

帖前 4:13-5:10: 在帖前第四章，保羅教導信徒如何生活去討神喜悅（**4:1**），就是要遠避淫行（**4:3-8**）以及在弟兄相愛一事上更加勉勵（**4:9-12**）。他們在地上與神同行的同時，也在等候主再來。他們面對的難題是在等候主再來時，有些信徒死了，令他們憂心。

經文解釋：

1. 解釋已死的信徒如何能在主再來時有份（13-18 節）：**4:13** 提出了一個關於主再來的問題。保羅已教導帖撒羅尼迦的信徒主會再來（**5:2** 有提及）。可是，在主再來之前已死了的信徒（聖經用「睡了」來形容這些信徒的狀況），他們會否被摒除在主再來這大事以外？保羅在**4:14** 的答案是，正如基督已經復活，神必會帶這些死了的信徒與基督一同回來。「帶來」在希臘文是“ago” – 它的意思是以一個群體的方式帶來。這是**4:13** 所說，帖撒羅尼迦信徒所不知道的，而保羅現在向他們解釋清楚這重要的真理。但基督如何能在祂回來時把他們全部帶來呢？答案在**4:15-18**，死了的信徒會復活，和活著的信徒一起在空中與主相遇，而活著的信徒會接著在死了的信徒之後被提到空中（**16-17 節**）。這是與主再回到地上是不同的事件——主回到地上時，祂的腳會站在地上（**亞 14:4**）而非在空中。這嶄新的事件有一個名稱：被提。有人認為我們會與主在空中相遇，而與祂一同在同一天回到地上。**5:1-3** 顯示這並不可能，因為被提是與主的日子（Day of the Lord）相提並論的。再者，這日子會如夜間的賊一樣來到（參**太 24:42-43**）。相反，主再來是在大災難之後發生的事（**太 24:21; 29-30**），它的時間是可以準確預測的。主的日子開始於被提，在千禧年時結束時終結，所以它開始的時間是不能預測的。保羅提出這新的啟示令**5:1-2** 的訊息更穩妥：被提可以在任何時候發生，所以主的日子必會如賊一般的來到，之前沒有任何警示。

林前 15:51-52 也支持活著的信徒與死了的信徒會一同有身體的轉變。在**林前 15 章**，保羅堅持復活是真實的事，否定了教會中說沒有復活的假教導，並向哥林多信徒保證所有信徒都要復活。在**林前 15:50-59**，保羅以在復活時所發生的事作總結。在那時，會有號筒響起（**林前 15:52**）。保羅又說，不是所有信徒都會死，但是所有信徒都要改變，這與他在**帖前 4:13-18** 所說的吻合。既然死了信徒的復活，與活著信徒的身體轉變要同時發生，被提也是一樣。

2. 命令要為主的日子作好準備

在**1:9-10**，保羅稱帖撒羅尼迦信徒為教會的榜樣，因為他們離棄偶像，歸向神。這顯然是一所外邦人的教會，因為當時的猶太人不會拜偶像。在完結這信時，他教導帖撒羅尼迦信徒，作為神聖潔的群體，他們該以如何等候主。

5:1-10 看來是**4:13-18** 的延續，但當中有些顯著的分別。在前面的討論中，保羅是在回應關於已死信徒的問題，但這裡卻是對活著並等候主的信徒的教導。這是全章的焦點，並以祂的再來作為最後的祝福語（**23 節**）。保羅以祂再來的時間開始討論（**1-3 節**）。與之前的討論有別，帖撒羅尼迦信徒在這課題上，不再需要特別的啟示，因為保羅已教導過他們。「主的日子」是指主會直接干預並完成祂的救贖的時期，它會像賊一般來到，意即它的到來是突然和不可預測的。這段時期包括自然主再來，但其他經文顯示它也包括大災難在內（**珥 2:8-3:6**，**帖後 2:2**），並以這世界的完結作結（**彼後 3:10**）。本段經文是放在**4:16-18** 的被提以後，意味著被提就是這段時間的開始。這與其他經文一致，因為「主的日子」的細節在不少的經文（如啟示錄）中被提及，令人能在主的日子開始後，預知這些細節會在何時發生。**只是「主的日子」（被提之後）在何時開始是不能預測的。**所以，我們要常常儆醒（**4-8 節**），重點是要好好控制自己，並要有三種基督徒的德行：信、望、愛（**8 節**）。這代表我們要積極地與基督同行，因為不論是生是死，或在現在、或在永恆，我們定必要與祂一同生活。