

God's Cosmic Plan

Key Verse: “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus.”
—***I Thessalonians 5:9***

Selected Scripture:
I Thessalonians 4:13-5:28

faith in, and obedience to, their master, Jesus. It is, rather, this present evil world (Greek, *kosmos*)—order of things—which is the object of God's wrath. This present order, and its leader, Satan, will be brought to an end and supplanted with a “new heavens and a new earth.”—II Pet 3:13

The ‘new heavens’ and ‘new earth’ will be brought to fruition by the raising from the dead those who have slept in the grave, both those who receive a heavenly spiritual reward as well as mankind in general, who will be raised to life here on the earth. The hope of the resurrection is a wonderful one, so stated by Paul, “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” (I Thess. 4:13) In the remaining verses of this chapter, Paul explains that it will first be the church—those faithful to the heavenly calling—who are raised from the dead. To these apply the promise,

THE KEY VERSE OF THIS
lesson points out a wonderful truth to those who are thoroughly consecrated to God at the present time. These are not to be the recipients of God's wrath, though they will go through various trials and testings in this narrow way. They are, instead, in the process of obtaining salvation by their

“so shall we ever be with the Lord.”—vs. 17

Further in this lesson, Paul indicates that before the rest of mankind experiences their resurrection to perfect human life upon the earth, this old order of things must pass away. This happens through a great time of trouble and tribulation, of which Jesus prophesied, recorded in Matthew 24:21. Paul here describes the trouble this way, “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (I Thess. 5:3) The metaphor of a woman in travail is fitting. Much pain and suffering is endured by a woman in childbirth, however, when her baby is born, she immediately forgets the former pain, on account of the joy of having a new life to cherish, nourish, and love.

Man also is going through much tribulation as this present order of things is nearing a close, ‘as travail upon a woman.’ He too, though, will forget this pain and suffering when Christ’s kingdom is established, giving ‘birth’ to a new righteous arrangement, including the raising of all in their graves to the opportunity for perfect human life. “Wonder not at this. For a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and will come forth—they who have done what is right to the resurrection of Life, and they whose actions have been evil to the resurrection of judgment.”—John 5:28,29, *Weymouth New Testament*

In the remaining verses of our lesson (I Thess. 5:8-28), Paul counsels those who are striving to receive a heavenly resurrection, and gives many important admonitions for daily living. “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.”—I Thess. 5:16-23 ■