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THE RAPTURE

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It is a strange thing that as you look through the records of minister's sermons as you look through the list of subjects that have been discussed in ~~church~~ church after church through the centuries you will find many a case where year after year there has never been a sermon preached on the rapture of the church. Even godly ministers, even many who have truly believed in Christ and His salvation and the great subjects of Scripture, many of them have never preached on this subject. To my mind that is a terrible commentary on human frailty, because all of us tend to repeat what we've heard. We tend to take the thoughts and ideas that have been presented to us and pass them on, and to get our ideas from other human beings instead of from God's Word. Anybody who believes this is God's Word has an obligation to try to understand not just a few verses, not just a few favorite books but to all of God's Word. It is all given us for our edification. It is God's message for His people in its entirety. When you examine the Bible in its entirety the fact it teaches the rapture of the church is not something that is gathered from a few difficult verses comparing some very strange things together; it is a very definite clear presentation to which almost half a chapter is directed. And so anyone who studies the Bible and believes it is God's Word and who seeks to find God's leading as God's child in the Bible, should some day take this half a chapter and read and say what does this mean and it is very simply. It's not one of the difficult sections of the Bible. I call your attention then to 1 Thess. 4:13-18 (reading text.)

I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep. Death is one of the facts that stares every human being in the face. We all have to face it, either as a possible experience for ourselves in the future, or as something definite we have known and passed through. Therefore this is a verse which is not one of the parts of the Bible that a Christian should just say, Well, there's a verse that does not have much to do with me. It all has a lot to do with you, all the Bible. But here's a verse that strikes right close to all of us.

I would not have you to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep. What about those who are asleep. Of course he means those who have died. That's perfectly obvious. Some people say, I take the whole Bible literally. I take every work of it literally. But somebody says I wonder if that person has ever read much of the Bible. You can't take all of any book that every was written literally. Because everything that ever was written contains figures of speech. It's a natural part of human language. It is proper to try to take everything literally and see if that's the natural interpretation. But anything ever written contains figures of speech, and figures of speech often are clearer than what is literal. A figure of speech does not have to be involved or obscure, it may be very clear. And the Bible like everything else has figures of speech in it. "Them who are asleep" is a figure of speech. It's perfectly clear what it means. It means those who have died. He does not want you to be ignorant about something important about them. What's that? So that you worry not even as others that have no hope. He does not say we are not to sorrow when our loved ones die. We can't help sorrowing when our loved ones die. It's a loss. It's inevitable that we sorrow.