

You Can Grieve with Hope

International Bible Lesson

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

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“But 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” (1 Thessalonians 4:13—KJV).

“Our friends, we want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad, as are those who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13—GNB).

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13—NRSV).

The Bible never criticizes anyone for grieving. When Jesus’ beloved friend, Lazarus, died, we read in the shortest verse in the Bible, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). On Palm Sunday, knowing the eventual consequences of the nation’s religious leaders rejecting Him as the Messiah, and knowing how the Romans would destroy Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, as Jesus “came near and saw the city, he wept over it” (Luke 19:41). On the night Judas betrayed Jesus, and before the temple guards arrested Him, Jesus told Peter, James, and John, “I am deeply grieved, even to death” (Mark 14:34). Jesus sometimes grieved and wept, but He did “not grieve as others do who have no hope.”

God does not want believers to be uninformed. Jesus grieved at the death of Lazarus knowing that He would bring Lazarus back to life; perhaps He grieved that He needed to bring Lazarus back after he had experienced the joys of heaven. Jesus grieved as He neared Jerusalem, knowing that by His death and resurrection those who believed in Him would receive the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. From Paul’s letters, we know that when a follower of Jesus dies, Jesus will bring them back alive. When He returns to Earth, Jesus will give everyone who trusts in Him a glorified resurrected body so they can live on Earth without danger, disease, or death. Paul wrote that believers need to encourage one another with the truth about Jesus, teaching that everyone who loves Jesus will experience true joy when they see Him.

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Thinking Further

1. What are some indications in Paul’s letter that it is okay for Christians to grieve the death of a loved one who also believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?
2. What aspect of the Christian hope did Paul emphasize in this letter?
3. How will Jesus return to our world?
4. How have some been deceived about Jesus’ return?
5. What is one sign that Paul mentions in this letter that Jesus’ return may be near?

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