

#3A Funeral Service for sister Gwen Starks

1 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 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. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

2 Now, this morning I want to bring comfort to you by showing you in the Scripture that we not only have God's promise that we will soon see our dear departed sister Gwen, but God has also confirmed that promise to us in Scripture, which is His Words to us, by showing us that he has already raised up the old testament saints. So we see God tells us in His Word that He will bring with him those that have already slept which means in their flesh they have died, but in their spirit they are still alive in Christ.

3 And to prove that there will be a resurrection we find that God has already proved it to us because He has already raised from the dead not only up his own first born son, as the Apostle Paul calls Him in Romans 8:29, but we see in scripture that God has already raised up from the dead the old testament saints when Jesus was raised up from the dead.

4 Now, did you know that? Are you aware that we are taught in the Bible that there has already been a resurrection taken place? I'm not talking about the resurrection of Lazarus. That was just to show you that the God dwelt in His Son Jesus and He, God is the resurrection and the Life. That's why when Jesus heard the news of Lazarus death he wept. That was the man, the son of God. But when he turned and stood before that Grave and said, Lazarus come forth, that was more than a man, that was God in His Son.

5 If you have your Bibles with you, please turn with me to Matthew chapter 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" 47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

6 Notice they not only were raised from the dead, but they went into the city and were seen by many people. This did not happen in a corner, God made it well know. The Bible also tells us in Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

7 So we have already seen that One resurrection has come, that of the old testament saints. The next resurrection will come soon. for this is the last days, and we see the handwriting on the wall everywhere.

8 Now, I know that may be contrary to some of your theology, but that is plainly what the Bible tells us. So if your theology is contradicted by the Word of God, then you had better recheck your theology, because theology is man's explanation, and not God's. God interprets His own Word by bringing it to pass. He said let there be light, and there was. That needs no interpretation. He said a virgin would conceive and she did. He said the Lamb of God would take away the sins of the world and he did.

9 And we are also taught in Proverbs 16:25 "there is a way that seems right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

10 So if you want to be raised up you had better make sure your theology reflect what God's word says, or you will be like those in Matthew 7:15 that Jesus speaks of and says, 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

11 And what is iniquity? iniquity is knowing to do what is right and you don't do it. Or knowing that you should not do something and you do it anyway.

12 In James 4:17 we read, Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. That's iniquity. And sin is just one thing, it's a lack of believing in Christ. And Jesus said Himself in John 16:9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; So there is only one form of sin, and that is unbelief. You sin because you believe not. So drinking is not sin, and smoking is not sin, and adultery and fornication are not sin. Those are attributes of unbelief. You do those things because you don't believe.

13 Jesus told us that the condemnation is not because of what man does, but his refusal to accept what God has done for him.

14 Now, every one who claims to be a believer will read John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. But that is where they stop. But let's read on. The next verse says, 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. And that means exposed.

15 The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:13 That which makes manifest is light. And John just told us the reason they will not come where there is the Light of God is because they do not wish to be exposed for what they really are.

16 But look at the attributes of the real true believer. The next verse tells us 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. Or that they had their source in God.

17 Now, in getting back to our text, we read from 1 Thessalonians 4 and began with verse 13 where Paul told us that the Lord Himself shall descend with a Shout, which is a military command, in other words God comes down and the first thing he does is to bring forth a message, and that message has one purpose and that is to incite us to action. The Bride makes herself ready.

18 Did you ever wonder what this is all about? Notice he tells us that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with three things. The First thing he mentions is a shout. Now, what do you suppose this shout is? Notice that Paul let's us know here that the very first thing God does when He descends is He gives forth a shout. And the Greek word Paul used here that was translated into the English Word shout is the Greek "keleuma". That word was translated into the English word shout, but it means a whole lot more than that. It means to incite by words. And incite means: To stir up, to encourage or urge on; to stimulate or to prompt into action:

19 Now, God always offers mercy before judgment. In Noah's day Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and the bible tells us he preached for 120 years, but isn't it strange that a prophet of God could come and warn the world of impending disaster and only his own family would hearken to the call and enter into the ark?

20 Jesus warned us as it was in the days of Noah so would it be when the son of man is revealed. Peter warned us that as it was in Noah's day wherein only eight souls were saved, so will it be at the end of the ages. so he is telling us there will be very few who will be saved. are you one of them?

21 So why do you suppose only 8 souls out of perhaps 6 billion people were saved while the rest perished? I'll tell you why? Because it says they turned down the mercy of God and therefore all that remained was judgment.

22 Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

23 You see how the people were so caught up with the things of this life, that they failed to heed the message that Noah brought and as a result they perished.

24 Now, we all know the story of the ten virgins, and we know that the story speaks of the end time and our being ready when the bridegroom comes. we know that there are some that were ready and some who were not. Those who were ready entered into the marriage and those who were not ready went to get ready, but it was too late and the door was shut on them.

25 Well the story begins by our reading that the ten virgins were all asleep. But then something awakens them, and we see in Matthew 25 that what awakens the sleeping virgins is a midnight cry. Not a midnight whisper, but a midnight cry, in other words, a shout, the same Shout, the same Message that we see declared in 1 Thessalonians 4.

26 The midnight cry or shout says, "behold the Bride Groom is here", come out to meet Him." But as we know some had oil in their lamps and some did not, and we know by many scriptures that oil represents the Holy Ghost. And the ones then with the oil in their vessels were those who went into the marriage supper and the door was shut.

27 Now, let's go back to 1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, (that's the first thing he does, and that is to prepare the elect for the rapture, to get them ready, a Message going forth.) Then the second thing that takes place he says, after the shout is He comes also with the voice of the archangel.

28 Now, this is the voice of the resurrection. because we are told in Matthew 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

29 And again we see that when Lazarus was raised from the dead was when Jesus called Him out of the grave with a loud Voice. John 11:43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

30 And in getting back to 1 Thessalonians 4:16 The Apostle Paul continues by telling us the third thing the Lord Himself does when he descends, He says, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (He's letting us know that before the trump of God, the dead in Christ will rise first. Again we see that would be The Loud Voice that calls them from the grave.

31 So then immediately after the dead in Christ are raised up, he says, and with the trump of God: And what is this trump of God? He tells us next. Always in Scripture we see that the feast of trumpets was a calling together an assembly. Ephesians 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

32 So the Apostle Paul continues by saying in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

33 Who is the them he speaks of? In Ephesians 1 he told us That he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.

34 Finally the Apostle tells us 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

35 Oh, what comfort we have knowing that God must come with a Shout, a Message first, and then those who hear that Message will be ready for the voice of the resurrection, and the trump that assembles the people for the catching away.

36 But what of those who hear it and do not act upon it? They will remain here on earth for the judgments.

37 Malachi 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; Notice, he is coming with great healing campaigns, just like Jesus come the first time with healing then a message followed. They loved the healing but turned down the Message. And as a result of this one coming, he says, and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves released from the stall. (In other words, this Ministry will bring a growing up into Christ and a deliverance to the people of God.)

38 3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

39 So who is going to come? It says The Lord Himself will do this.

40 4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the

statutes and judgments. 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

41 So we see there is coming a time of great woe as this world has never seen, but just like it was in the days of Noah, God promised to send forth a Message of deliverance.

42 My question to you this morning, will you even recognize it when it comes? That is how the Jews missed Jesus, they knew he was to come, but when he came according to Scripture but not according to their understanding of Scripture, they rejected Him, because he did not come the way they thought he would come.

43 So my question to you this morning is, has He already come down with a shout and you don't even know it? Sister Gwen knew it, and she lived her life knowing it, and making ready for this great day when the voice of God will call forth His elect, and those that are alive and remain will gather together with them at the last trump, and then we will be taken out of here before the great judgments of Malachi 4 and Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 28 take place. Are you ready? Will you see sister Gwen when she returns with the sleeping saints?

44 Let us pray...