

Get Ready For Take Off, Part 1 Rapture Series

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Intro: On July 20, 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong left the Apollo Lunar Command Module and became the first human to set foot on the moon.

A) Perhaps you recall his classic line, *“One small step for man; one giant leap for mankind.”*

B) **Let me tell you something:** The leap Armstrong referred to cannot hold a candle to the leap you’ll be taking when the Lord comes in the clouds to rapture His church.

V. 17 – Those who are alive on the earth – Caught up

C) **I think it is time that we get Ready for take off !**

D) The rapture of the Church is a subject that Paul begins to discuss here in 1 Thessalonians Ch. 4&5

E) So we are going to spend the next several weeks talking about this – 4 part series I am calling **GET READY FOR TAKE OFF**

Part 1 Is the rapture a Biblical concept

Part 2 Why the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation

Part 3 The need to be aware of the times and the seasons

Part 4 How should we be living in preparation for the Rapture of the Church?

Today: Is the Rapture a Biblical concept:

#1 The Rapture in the Bible

#2 The confusion in Thessalonica

#3 Reasons for the Rapture.

#1 The Rapture in the Bible

A) When the subject of the rapture comes up - there are others who say– **Wait a minute the word rapture is not even seen in the Bible !**

B) **The reality is it is biblical it just depends on what Bible you are reading**

1) You see, the New Testament was written in Greek.

C) The phrase in verse 17, translated “caught up,” is the Greek word *harpazo*, which means to be snatched away “to be grabbed by the collar and taken up with force.”

D) When the New Testament was translated into Latin, translators used the word *raptus* for *harpazo*—from which we get our word **“rapture.”**

So in most English versions of the Bible in v.17 instead of using the word Rapture

A) They use the word snatched away or caught up to explain what is going to happen.

B) It is the description of the Latin word *raptus* and the Greek word *Harpazo*

C) See the issue isn't what you call it – that is not what matters – Harpazo – Raptus / rapture Snatching –

1) It doesn't matter what you call it – what matters is that you are going to be a part of it.

Is the rapture referred to in other places in Scripture?

A) Consider 2 scriptures where it is seen directly.

#1 John 14:1-3 Set the scene -

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

A) Notice a few things here: Jesus says – I am going to my fathers house to prepare a place = Heaven

{ that is where Jesus ascended to and remains – Preparing for us } 2,000 yrs

B) But then Jesus says – I will come again to receive you to myself that where I am, there you may be also.

1) Jesus is clearly talking about coming to take them to Heaven.

C) 3 comings – 1st to the earth Incarnation - as a lamb – give His life.

1) 2nd Coming – comes to the earth – as a lion – set up a Kingdom.

D) In between the two is this event – Rapture – comes not to the earth but to the clouds – meets his Church in the air – takes them to heaven.

E) That is what Jesus is referring to here. John 14

You mean to say some are not going to die – caught up?

#2 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – { Nursery room slogan}

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality

A) Describes a Change that takes place at the last trumpet – Rapture

B) In a moment in the twinkling of a eye – Metamorphosis

C) Caterpillar becomes a butterfly

1) **NEW BODIES RD 2 COR 5**

D) That is what is going to happen to us – right now we are like the caterpillar crawling around

{ Complete transformation – Butterfly

D) So there shouldn't be any confusion – the rapture is a Biblical word

1) The concept is seen directly in other passages in Scripture

THE CONFUSION IN THESSALONICA

A) **The confusion here was not about whether the rapture existed – they fully believed that it was coming. –**

B) **Their question had to do with – What happens to those who die before the rapture takes place – are they going to miss out on this glorious event**

C) **That is what Paul addresses here/** note v.13 again - *I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep,*

Sleep was a common way to express death in the ancient world.

A) In John 11 Jesus referred to Lazarus –

John 11:11-15

"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

12 Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." 13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

B) **So from that example of Jesus Christians began to call death *sleep*: they emphasized the idea of *rest*.**

{ **Resting with the Lord – in Heaven**

1) 2 Cor 5:8 Declares plainly that to **be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord.**

C) **So for the believer – death was seen as resting – with the Lord – [death is not final]**

1) See that loved one again – because they are with the Lord

D) **Understand the Bible never describes the death of the unbeliever as *sleep*, for there is no rest, peace or comfort for them in death.**

1) Those who die not knowing Jesus – go to Hell – place of weeping and gnashing of teeth – outer darkness

How could a loving God send people to Hell – He doesn't – Men choose to go there of their own free will – Rejecting Christ

A) **God doesn't want people to go to hell – that is why He sent Jesus**

All sinned / wages of sin

B) **Sin separated mankind from God – all Sinners – Dead in Sin – but Jesus came to pay the price –**

1) **We believe in Jesus – Brought to life**

John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

C) So Asleep in Jesus, is just a term that separates us from what happens to the unbeliever – the unbeliever dies – Dead already living in sin

D) So without Christ you are already dead, twice dead! So it's just to separate the believer from the unbeliever— this term of sleep.

So Paul says I don't want you to sorrow as those who have no hope.

A) I have done funerals where most of the people who were in attendance were not believers – Saddest thing – they have no hope – so sad – down

B) Contrast that with funerals where almost everyone there is a believer and the person who died was a believer – **complete opposite** - We have a hope -

C) When a sinner dies, we mourn for them. When a believer dies we only mourn for ourselves, We will miss them

1) But we don't more for them - because they are with the Lord! { **So don't sorrow NO HOPE !**

But where do those who have died fit into this rapture concept ?

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

A) Note this – Paul says – Those who died those who are asleep – God is going to bring with Him 1ST That means they are already in heaven

B) Now this should forever dispel the teaching of soul sleep { Explain

1) Some falsely teach that when believers die, they remain in the casket until the Rapture.

C) But what did Jesus say to the thief on the cross next to Him?

He didn't say, 'You will sleep for a couple thousand years and then you'll be resurrected again.' No, He said, '**Today you'll be with Me in Paradise** (Luke 23:43).

D) Those who have died – they are with Jesus now – to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord . 2 Cor 5:8

E) They are with Jesus now in Heaven AND when the rapture happens –

1) they are going to **come with Him** to meet those who are caught up in the air

A) Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that **those who are asleep** - Christians who have died before Jesus returns - **will by no means** be at a disadvantage.

B) See God will allow **those who are asleep** to share in the glory of **the coming of the Lord.**

C) The rapture is going to be a glorious event – and those who have died in the Lord are not going to miss it

1) they are just going to be there from the other side – **There is going to be a great reunion** – in the air -

V.17 CLOUDS

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

The Dead in Christ will rise first – what does that mean: { COMPLICATED

A) When someone dies, the moment he leaves his body, an amazing thing happens. He moves into eternity, where there is no time.

B) **There's no past, no present, no future. It's just all one great big Now because eternity transcends time.**

C) How do I know this? Albert Einstein hypothesized about heaven without even knowing it:

D) **Theory of relativity – which has been proven**

1) The Theory basically says that if someone could ever travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles per second time would cease to be.

E) **At the speed of light – Time stops ! So what does that have to do with this ?**

1) The Bible tells us that God is light – Heaven – no time – all Now !

That is God's perspective – He sees everything in the now !

A) So from the perspective of those in heaven, the Rapture has happened and we're already with them in heaven.

B) **How can this be? Think of it this way . . . Rose Parade - Here I am on Colorado Boulevard, watching the Rose Parade.**

C) Now you are a few blocks before me – You call me on My Cell Phone – USC football fan – Did you see the USC float – No

1) Now it just past you – Now it is in your past – but it hasn't come to me yet so it is in my future. It is coming – but isn't here yet.

D) That is the way we view things here – Past Present and Future – Perspectives

Good year Blimp – Sees it all in the Now - ! That is Heaven –

A) **So for those who have died – who are resting now with Jesus in heaven the Rapture has occurred**

B) **But for us on earth – We are still waiting – looking – longing**

1) So Paul says – those who have died are not going to miss it they are with the Lord and will come with Him in the Rapture –

C) **They have risen first – And at the time of the rapture we who are alive and remain on the earth – will be caught up to meet them – Reunion time**

D) So V.18 Comfort one another with these words – See We have this hope **Absolute expectation of coming good**

1) Death – Heaven – Things tough on this earth – crime etc The Rapture is coming – We are going to Heaven

E) So don't get worked up – freaked out – sorrow as those who have no hope – Heaven is waiting – Heaven is calling –

Article describing how people describe a glass that is ½ full

Optimist : Smiles and says – the glass is ½ full

Pessimist – Frowns – the glass is ½ empty

Realist: The glass is

Idealist: The glass should be full

Feminist : My glass seems to be less full than his glass

Anarchist : break the glass

Capitalist : Sell the glass

Environmentalist : Save the water

Biblicist : It doesn't matter – What glass – Who cares

We are just strangers and pilgrims here – we are going to Heaven

The rapture could happen at any moment and we are out of here

3 Reasons for the Rapture: To Take up God's Children

A) Our world is in need of Judgment – Corrupt – Paper news – everyday we read of horrible atrocities of a planet that has turned it's back on God

B) God is going to Judge this world – Tribulation time – **7 yrs of the worst calamities the world has ever seen or experienced**

C) Cataclysmic earth quakes / Tsunami's / famine / war / nuclear waste

D) The Bible says that unless those days were shortened no one would survive

1) So bad in Rev 6 call out to the Mts fall on us and crush – hide us from the wrath of the Lamb

D) Judgment is coming – Just God ! – **He waits** – None perish

But what kind of a father would – He be if he judged the world with his Children in it.

A) Before judgment comes – the rapture is God's way of taking his Children out before the wrath begins

B) Termites in the house – Fumigate cover with a tent to kill those termites

1) Before the tent could cover the house – I would make sure my wife and kids were not in the house.

C) What does a president or King do with his ambassadors before he declares war on another country – He gets his ambassadors out.

1) Calls embassy – Vacate – We are God's Ambassadors

So #1 it is to take out his Children before the Judgment starts

#2 It is to Shake up the Heathen.

A) Not only will the Rapture ensure our safety, it will also bring about salvation.

B) On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke of the day when the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall turn to blood, and whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:17–21).

C) There are family members who have listened to you share Jesus, but don't believe in Him.

1) There are friends who have heard your testimony and say, "That's all well and good—for you."

D) There are co-workers with whom you've shared the plan of salvation who seem only to turn a deaf ear.

1) The day is coming when we will be suddenly taken up and all your words will make perfect sense.

Now some idiotically say: I will wait until then to see if this is all true - Then I'll receive Jesus as my Savior."

A) Listen If you cannot receive Jesus Christ in this day of grace, what makes you think you will be able to stand for Him in that time of intense persecution?

B) Those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord in the Tribulation will be saved—but they'll lose their heads in the process (Revelation 20:4).

C) Lifesaving technique dictates that if a drowning person fights against him, a lifeguard must knock him out in order to save him.

D) So, too, the Tribulation is God's knockout punch to the heathen in order to save them.

#3 To Wake up a Nation

A) In referring to the Tribulation as "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), Jeremiah makes it clear that it has a specific purpose for the nation of Israel.

B) Israel will at last recognize her Messiah during the Tribulation.

Deut 4:30-31

30 When you are in distress, [the tribulation] and all these things come upon you in the **latter days**, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice 31(for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

C) How will this come about? **Two witnesses** will preach in the streets of Jerusalem, which some commentators believe could be Elijah and Moses (Revelation 11).

D) One hundred forty-four thousand Jewish Billy Grahams will preach throughout the world (Revelation 7). Angels will preach in the skies (Revelation 7).

E) When Jesus returns, all of Israel will lift up their eyes and say, **"Where did You get those wounds?"** "In the house of My friends," He will answer (Zechariah 13:6).

F) Then the entire nation of Israel shall be saved (Romans 11). **What a glorious day that will be!**

WAKE UP A NATION

SHAKE UP THE HEATHEN

TAKE UP HIS CHILDREN

Conclusion : Are you going to be Taken up or shaken up ?