

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Rapture Ready, Part 1

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. – PRAY

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.

C) **Do Not Be Ignorant Brethren.**

There are several things God says in His word that He doesn’t want us to be ignorant about.

- ❖ Don’t be ignorant about **God’s plan for Israel** (Romans 11:25).
- ❖ Don’t be ignorant about **spiritual gifts** (1 Corinthians 12:1).
- ❖ Don’t be ignorant about **suffering and trials** in the Christian life (2 Corinthians 1:8).
- ❖ Don’t be ignorant about **the rapture** and the second coming of Jesus (1 Thess. 4:13).

Remarkably, these are areas where ignorance is still common in the Christian world.

A) The Rapture of the Church is a big one!

B) The rapture of the Church is a subject that Paul begins to discuss here in Ch. 4:13 - Ch. 5

C) So we are going to spend the next three weeks talking about this – 3 Part series – **RAPTURE READY**

1) Cover the **What** the **WHY**, the **HOW** – the **WHO** – and even to a certain point **the When**

D) Last study... Why it will be before the Tribulation.

Now some of you might be thinking: Pastor Rob – I don’t see the word rapture in my Bible –

A) Not in My Concordance Is the Rapture even a Biblical concept?

Aa) First question we want to answer today.

B) Where does the word RAPTURE – originate.

C) Some Bible teachers – will suggest the whole idea of the rapture was invented by a Pastor in the 1800’s – John Nelson Darby

1) Not true and very poor scholarship.

D) First part of my message – will be a little technical

Where does the word rapture originate?

A) **V.17 “Caught up” – Greek word Harpazo** = to be snatched away.

❖ **“to be grabbed by the collar and taken up with force.”**

B) V.17 – Those who are alive and remain will be caught up = snatched away.

1) The Latin form of the Greek word Harpazo is **Raptus** from which we get our English word – **RAPTURE.**

C) Other uses of Harpazo

❖ Acts 8:38 **“the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away....”**

❖ 2 Corinthians 12:8 Paul was caught up into the 3rd Heaven

D) ACTS 21 – Paul rescued by the Roman soldier from the mob!

Grabbed him and carried him away. –

The Characteristics of this event **V.16**

A)The Lord Himself will descend! – Jesus himself is coming – **that is what we would expect – Wedding**

B)**Imagine girls** – getting ready for your Wedding – Venue is decorated – the flowers the Dress – sticking pins in people – corsages

C)Walking down the Isle – instead of your fiancé the groom waiting for you

1)It is his best friend – **or stranger – PROXY.**

D)He wanted me to tell you he loves you but he was busy and couldn't make it

1)**Disappointed RIGHT – FURIOUS** might be a better word.

E)He better be there if He Loves You – Right?

JESUS OUR BRIDEGROOM – LOVES US – Waiting for this day!

A)He is coming himself to escort us into HEAVEN!

B)NOT ONLY WILL THE Lord himself DESCEND - **It is going to be Loud!**

C)Shout – It is time – Get up here – Come away My beloved

D)With the voice of an archangel - Maybe Michael

E)The Trumpet of God – trumpet sounds

Will We hear this? Will non Believers hear any of this? – Not sure

A)Acts 9 – Jesus met Paul on road to Damascus – his travel companions heard a voice – but couldn't decipher what it was saying – only Paul

B)It could be that the rapture has the same affect.

Pause here for a moment – Clear up a misconception about this trumpet blast –

A)Christians who believe the rapture will take place at the end of the tribulation –

B)Point to the 7th Trumpet in Revelation 11:15 THE LAST TRUMPET – that is blown in REV.

C)Here is what we need to understand about The Trumpet of God Vs the 7th Trumpet in the book of Revelation

- ❖ The trumpets of Revelation 8–11 are blown by angels,
- ❖ The trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4 is the trumpet of *God*—

C)The subjects are different:

- ❖ Here it is the church;
- ❖ Revelation it is a wicked world.

D)The results are different:

- ❖ Here it is the glorious catching up of the church to be with the Lord;
- ❖ Revelation it is further judgment upon a godless world.

E) Worth noting

F)So the rapture is going to be an event that Jesus is fully engaged in – He comes Himself to the clouds –

1)It is LOUD – Shout – Voice – Trumpet of God

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 – LAST NIGHT – upper room **tough words – Leaving – Betray – Forsake – Peter Deny..... Love You**

"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. - John 14:1-3

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

A)That is where Jesus ascended to and remains – Preparing for us – 2,000 years

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

C)Note that Jesus says – I will come again and set up my kingdom here on earth – **NO! 2ND COMING**

1) I WILL COME AGAIN – TO TAKE YOU TO this place that I have been preparing for you!

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

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

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

B) 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.

C) That's what Jesus is referring to in John 14

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. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

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

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

C) Caterpillar becomes a butterfly

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

{ Complete transformation – Butterfly – NEW BODIES

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

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

Did the early Church Fathers believe in the rapture? MENTION 2

A) Irenaeus was a Pastor of the church in Lyons, France. (130 AD – 202 AD)

B) He was an eyewitness to the Apostle John (who wrote the Book of Revelation) and a disciple of

Polycarp, the first of the Apostle John's disciples.

C) Irenaeus is most-known for his 5-volume treatise, *Against Heresies* in which he exposed the false religions and cults of his day

Irenaeus wrote: “A coming time of difficulty and unrest on planet earth –

“And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.” (2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.” *Against Heresies 5.29,*

D) Not only did Irenaeus believe in the rapture but he believed it would happen before the great tribulation

Cyprian was Pastor of the church in Carthage. (200 AD – 258 AD)

A) In *Treatises of Cyprian* he wrote in describing the end times Great Tribulation:

“We who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. Do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, **that by an early departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?**

Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, **which snatches us hence**, and sets us free from the snares of the world and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”

B) SO the apostles believed in the rapture – Many of the early church fathers taught and wrote about the Rapture – long before Darby in 1800!

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, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.**

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

A) In John 11 Jesus referred to Lazarus – "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

B)Text tells us that Lazarus was dead
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."

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

1)Resting with the Lord – in Heaven

D)For the Christian – Death is like laying down for a nap and waking up in glory – **Like My Friend This Week.**

When someone we love who knew Jesus dies – We SORROW

A)Miss them – can't talk to them any more – miss everything about them

Aa) Their **Smell – laugh – friendship** – the stability – **WE SORROW FOR US!**

B)BUT we don't sorrow for them – we don't sorrow as someone who doesn't have hope!

C)Death scene **believer vs non believer** – Believer – sorrow but peace

1)There is comfort

D)Unbeliever – there is just agony – **NO IDEA WHERE THEY ARE!**

WE HAVE this glorious assurance: 2 Cor. 5:8 To be absent from this body – is to be present with the Lord

A)Context of 2 Corinthians 5 –NEW BODIES – TENT wears out – new Body - **Not naked** – no spirit's with no body! – **Heavenly body.**

B)That is the Hope of the believer in death – turn in the TENT for the New body – the Mansion in Glory.

C)How can we be so Sure? – One word – **RESURRECTION**

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 THAT JESUS ROSE – WE WILL **RISE** in death – When Jesus comes He will **bring WITH HIM** – those who have died in Jesus.

B)This is what Paul means in v.15 - **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.**

C)They have already preceded us – They are already with Jesus in glory and when He comes to the clouds – **BRINGS THEM WITH HIM**
1)AND when we are caught up – **REUNION**

Wedding Reception from Both ends

A)Those waiting for it to start and the bride and groom to be announced

B)Those coming with the Bride and Groom –

C)Since we **are all** the Bride of Christ – we are meeting outside the great banquet hall of heaven – entering into together

D)The rest of Heaven is waiting for us all to be ushered in. – **GLORIOUS**

So what does it mean the Dead in Christ will Rise First?

A)The Dead in Christ have already risen first-the believer in Christ who died is already with Jesus

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 !**

1) So what does that have to do with this ?

The Bible teaches us that God is LIGHT & IN HIM – NO DARKNESS

A) **Where GOD Dwells time has stopped**

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

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

How can this be?

A) Think of it this way . . . Rose Parade – Church trip

Pastor Alex with Junior High – Lake AVE, watching the Rose Parade.

C) Pastor Aaron and the High Schoolers are a few blocks ahead – **Los Robles**

1) Jamie is with the Young Adults – **Wilson AVE**

2) Eddie and the Hill Family – **Hill AVE**

D) **ALL COMMUNICATING** – Here comes the USC float – Amazing - Fans

E) They are each seeing the floats in succession as they go by.

Now I am there with some folks from the Marriage fellowship – I have connections – Good Year Blimp –

See beginning end at ONCE

A) **THAT** is the perspective of those who have already died – they have already risen – first

B) So Paul says – those who have died are not going to miss it

1) Because 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) They are there: With Jesus – He is coming – Shout – Voice – trumpet

1) **We are Caught up – BOOM - RENUNION – HEAVEN – WEDDING CELEBRATION**

V.18 Comfort one another with these words –

A) **WHEN** we see the world getting crazier by the day - **Man kills two year old daughter** – interrupted him playing video game.

B) **Woman was killed – cut up – stuffed into a suitcase – Lord Jesus come quickly**

C) **Election stuff gets more and more crazy – NO HOPE IN THIS POLITICAL SYSTEM.**

1) **LORD JESUS COME QUICKLY!**

D) Two Sources Of Hope For Our World

1) **Rapture or Revival –**

As we close today: Answer one more question

A) Consider quickly What is the reason for the Rapture:

B) Why not just Return – set it all right ?
Three reasons – Done

#1 To Take up God's Children

A) Because of the Wickedness in this world

B) **God is going to Judge this world – Tribulation time – 7 years 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 Mountains 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) **Termites in the house – Fumigate – cover with a tent to kill those termites**

B) Before the tent could cover the house – You would make sure your wife and kids were not in the house.

1) Oh no we forgot Jr. in Bed

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

D) Before judgment comes – the rapture is God’s way of taking his Children and HIS AMBASSADORS OUT before the wrath begins

E) So #1 it is to take out His Children before the Judgment starts

#2 It is to Shake up UNBELIEVERS

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

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 THINK: I will wait until then to see if this is all true - Then I’ll receive Jesus as my Savior.”

A) YOU might think that – but know this – many will get saved during tribulation.

B) But they are going to lose their lives – brutally martyred –

C) Listen if you can’t stand for Jesus – now in a time when it is still accepted to be a Christ follower

1) What makes you think you will be able to stand in a day when it is not?

D) So rapture is to Take up His Children

1) Shake up unbelievers

#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) God’s heart is to save – especially Israel – Goes to great lengths

Two witnesses will preach in the streets of Jerusalem, which some commentators believe could be Elijah and Moses (Revelation 11).

One 144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams will preach throughout the world (Revelation 7).

Angels will preach in the skies (Revelation 7).

When Jesus returns, all of Israel will lift up their eyes and say, “Where did You get those wounds?”

A) **In the house of My friends,” He will answer (Zechariah 13:6).**

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

WAKE UP A NATION

SHAKE UP UNBELIEVERS

TAKE UP HIS CHILDREN

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

Going? or Left Behind