

# “The Rapture”

## 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18

---

One of the most exciting events of the end times is the rapture, which is commonly known as the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). The church will be caught up to meet Jesus in the clouds. The Thessalonians had some misunderstandings about the status of believers that have died. Are they lost? Will they not be raised from the dead when Jesus returns? In today’s passage, the apostle Paul brings clarity to what will happen to believers who have passed into the next life when Jesus comes back. This teaching is a great source of comfort and hope for believers.

---

**The Thessalonians’ Question:** Are believers who have died going to miss out on the events surrounding the Lord’s return?

### #1. BELIEVERS WHO HAVE DIED WILL NOT MISS OUT ON ANY EVENTS LINKED TO CHRIST’S RETURN, v. 13

- A. Death can be mysterious, v. 13a
- B. Errors about life after death can cause grief, v. 13b
- C. Christians can face death with hope, v. 13c
- D. No believers will be left out of the resurrection, (v. 14, 1 Cor 15:20, Ro 8:23)

### #2. ALL BELIEVERS, LIVING & DEAD, RECEIVE THEIR GLORIFIED BODIES AT CHRIST’S RETURN, v. 14

- A. The death & resurrection of Christ should be a key belief of Christians, v. 14a
- B. Jesus’ resurrection is the guarantee of all believers’ resurrection, v. 14b (1 Cor 15:20, 23)
- C. Jesus’ resurrection breeds hope, v. 14c (1 Cor 15:17-19)

### #3. THE DEAD IN CHRIST ARE IN THE DISEMBODIED STATE IN HEAVEN, 2 Cor 5:4, Phil 1:21-24

- A. Being “unclothed” is the disembodied state, 2 Cor 5:4
- B. Being “clothed” is having the glorified body, 2 Cor 5:4
- C. Being with the Lord is Paul’s preference, Phil 1:23
- D. Being in the body benefits Paul’s converts, Phil 1:24-25
- E. The example of Moses & Elijah, Mat 17:2-3

### #4. THE DEAD IN CHRIST ARE FIRST TO BE GLORIFIED AT THE RETURN OF CHRIST, vv. 15-16

- A. The dead are first to be raised, v. 15
- B. The Lord will come down from heaven, v. 16a
- C. With a loud command, v. 16b
- D. With the voice of the archangel, v. 16c
- E. With the trumpet call of God, v. 16d (1 Cor 15:52)

### #5. BELIEVERS WHO ARE LIVING AT THE RAPTURE WILL BE TRANSLATED, vv. 17-18

- A. The generation of Christians at the rapture will not experience physical death, (1 Cor 15:50-54)
- B. After the dead are resurrected the living are “caught up” (*harpazo – to seize, catch up, snatch away*), v. 17a
- C. The Latin term *rapio* is the origin of the “rapture”
- D. They will be reunited with the dead in the clouds, v. 17b
- E. They will meet the Lord & be with Him forever, v. 17c
- F. The rapture is a source of comfort to believers, 18

### #6. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

- A. Nothing is said about the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period.
- B. There are three views regarding the timing of the rapture
  - 1. Pre-tribulation:
  - 2. Mid-tribulation:
  - 3. Post-tribulation:
- C. The timing of the rapture is not something to be dogmatic about
- D. The rapture is a doctrine of comfort not fixing dates

### NOTES:

Hillcrest Church  
May 3, 2020  
©Pastor Bruce Guckelberg, PhD

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- #1. What are some common views today that nonbelievers have of life after death?
- #2. What did the average Greek in Paul's day believe about life after death?
- #3. In what sense do many people today have false hope about life after death?
- #4. What is the disembodied state (also known as the intermediate state)?
- #5. Discuss Paul's thought process as he contemplated being executed or released and continuing with his ministry (Phil 1:20-26).
- #6. What conclusions can you make about Paul from the Philippian passage?
- #7. Why is it important not to predict the date of Jesus' return?
- #8. What does it mean to live under the imminent (any moment) return of Christ?
- #9. What was Paul's main point about the rapture?
- #10. Is the rapture something to be dogmatic about regarding the different positions?
  1. Pre-tribulation
  2. Mid-tribulation
  3. Post-tribulation
- #11. Which position do you maintain?

## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:** Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup>According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage each other with these words.

**Philippians 1:20-26:** I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup>I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup>but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup>so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

**2 Corinthians 5:1-6:** Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. <sup>2</sup>Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup>because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. <sup>6</sup>Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.