

“The Rapture of the Church”
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
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I. Introduction

- A. “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Peter 3:4)
 - 1. Jesus promised to come again (John 14)
 - 2. It’s called “The Rapture of the Church”
 - 3. Some say the word “rapture” is not in the Bible
 - a) “Caught up” or Greek “harpazo” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
 - 4. Others say the early church fathers did not teach it.
 - 5. It’s a New Testament mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
 - a) Jesus (John 14)
 - b) Paul (1 Thessalonians 4)
 - c) (1 Corinthians 15)
 - d) (Philippians 3:20-21)
- B. Five facts about the Rapture
 - 1. The problem of the Rapture
 - 2. The pillars of the Rapture
 - 3. The participants of the Rapture
 - 4. The plan of the Rapture
 - 5. The profit of the Rapture

II. The Problem of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

- A. Ignorant
 - 1. What happens after death?
 - 2. “To be absent from the body...” (2 Corinthians 5:8)
 - 3. “To depart and to be with Christ which is far better” (Philippians 1:23)
 - 4. “To die is gain” (Philippians 1:21)
- B. Asleep
 - 1. A metaphor for death
 - 2. Only used for Christians
 - 3. Only for the physical body, not the soul or spirit
 - 4. Only a temporary state (still alive)
 - a) Illustration- Lazarus (John 11)
- C. Sorrow
 - 1. It’s natural
 - a) Illustration- Jesus wept
- D. Hope
 - 1. Hope even in death
 - 2. Yes, we sorrow, but not a hopeless sorrow
 - 3. Our hope is found in Jesus Christ.

III. The Pillars of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:14-15a)

- A. The death of Christ (v.14)

1. "For if" (v.14)
 - a) "Since"
 - 1) It's a first-class condition and assumes a fact
2. What do Christians believe about the cross?
- B. The resurrection of Christ (v.14)
 1. "And rose again" (v.14)
 2. What do Christians believe about the resurrection?
 - a) It's the foundation for all of our hope
 - b) Christ, the first fruits
- C. The revelation from Christ (v.15a)
 1. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" (v.15a)
 - a) (John 14)
 - b) "A mystery" (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
 - 1) Not in the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:5)

IV. The Participants of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:15b)

- A. "Alive in Christ" (v.15)
 1. "We which are alive and remain" (v.15)
 - a) Illustration- Paul was looking for Jesus
 - b) It's imminent
- B. "Asleep in Christ"
 1. "Them which are asleep" (v.15)
 2. If a Christian dies before the Rapture (2 Corinthians 5)
 3. Will all Christians living at the time of the Rapture be taken?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No partial rapture
 - c) It's the Rapture of the church
 - d) What is the church?
 1. Jesus said, "I will build my church."
 2. Born on the Day of Pentecost
 3. Taken to heaven at the Rapture
 4. It's the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:27)
 5. All because we are "in Christ" (v.16)
 - a. No spot
 - b. No wrinkle
 - c. It's holy and without blemish

V. The Plan of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

- A. Return of Christ
 1. "For the Lord Himself" (v.16)
 - a) Illustration- "This same Jesus" (Acts 1:11)
 - b) "And to wait for His son from Heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:10)
 2. "Shall descend from Heaven" (v.16)
 - a) "My Father's house" (John 14)
 3. "With a shout" (v.16)
 - a) It's a shout of command
 - b) Illustration- "Lazarus came forth" (John 11)

4. "The voice of the archangel" (v.16)
 5. "The trumpet of God" (v.16)
 - a) Not the seven trumpets of Revelation
 - b) (Revelation 4)
- B. Resurrection of the dead in Christ
1. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first" (v.16)
 2. It's in the future tense
 3. It's Paul's reassuring affirmation
 4. It's the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23)
 5. "For this corruptible must put on" (1 Corinthians 15:53)
- C. Rapture of the living in Christ
1. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up" (v.17)
 - a) Greek- "*harpazo*"
 - b) "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52)
- D. Reunion
1. "Together with them" (v.17)
 2. Who?
 - a) Our loved ones who died in Christ
 3. "In the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (v.17)
 - a) Contrast with The Second Coming (Revelation 19)
 4. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (v.17)
 - a) Face to face with Jesus forever
 - b) It's the imminent hope of the church

VI. The Profit of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

- A. It comforts us (v.18)
1. We have hope beyond the grave
 2. We will see our loved ones again
- B. It cleanses us
1. (1 John 3:3)
- C. It compels us
1. "Therefore, my beloved brethren" (1 Corinthians 15:58)

VII. Conclusion

- A. Are you ready?
1. Realize you are a sinner
 2. Repent and turn from sin
 3. Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior
 - a) (John 3:16)