

STANDING FIRM

Part Five: *Rapture*

October 1, 2023

This fall, we're studying the Apostle Paul's letters to the Thessalonians to learn how to stand firm in the Lord. Last Sunday, we looked at 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, where Paul urges the Thessalonians to live in a way that pleases God. Today, we are going to examine 4:13-18 where Paul teaches the Thessalonians about the Rapture.

You need to know three things to understand 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

1. Bible teachers use *Rapture* to describe when Jesus will take His Church to Heaven.
2. Verses 13-18 are not an introduction to the Rapture but an explanation of how it will occur.

Paul taught the Thessalonians about the Rapture when he planted the church. We know this because Paul refers to the Rapture in this letter three times before his detailed explanation of it in chapter four (1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13).

3. False teachers told the Thessalonians they had missed the Rapture.

False teachers were saying the Rapture had already occurred, and the Thessalonians were living in the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:1-2; 1 Thess. 3:3-4).

In Vs. 13, Paul says his purpose for writing about the Rapture is to bring comfort to Christians.

Paul says he wants the Thessalonians to know what will happen to their dead Christian loved ones so they will not grieve like non-Christians who have no hope of Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-6). Paul knew the Rapture would bring comfort to the new Christians.

In Vs. 14, Paul says God will bring back with Jesus Christians who have died.

Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, we can be equally certain that the souls of dead Christians will return with Christ when He comes for living Christians (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thes. 5:10).

In Vs. 15-17, Paul makes three things crystal clear about the Rapture:

1st - His Rapture doctrine came directly from the Lord. Vs. 15

Paul did not invent or concoct the Rapture; the doctrine came directly from Jesus. Jesus promised His followers that He would return one day and take them to Heaven (John 14:1-3).

2nd - Jesus will descend from Heaven with two shouts and a trumpet blast. Vs. 16

Jesus is in Heaven today, where He has been since His ascension, seated at the right hand of His Father (Acts 1:9-11; 7:56; Heb. 1:3). The Lord Jesus is ruling, preparing a place for Christians - waiting on His Father to tell Him to return to earth to get His Bride. One day, Jesus will come with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

The Greek word translated *shout* in Vs. 16 was used for a commander calling his troops to fall in (John 5:25). An archangel adds his voice to the Lord's command. Then, a trumpet will be blown from Heaven, calling God's people to assemble.

3rd – All Christians (dead and living) will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. Vs. 16-17

Dead Christians will be resurrected first. Their sin-corrupted bodies will be instantly changed into glorified bodies and united with their glorified spirits. Then, the Christians alive when Jesus returns will be caught up, and their body and spirit will be transformed to be like the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:51–53, NLT).

At the Rapture, the dead in Christ will be raised and join the living saints, experience a complete body and soul transformation, and be transported to Heaven to be rewarded. Therefore, there is no need to grieve over Christians who have died.

When will the Rapture occur?

- Only God knows for sure. But there are three theories on when the Rapture will take place (Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, and Post-Tribulation).

Some Christians believe Jesus will snatch up Christians before the Tribulation begins (Revelation Chapter 6). Some Christians believe Jesus will snatch up Christians around the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation Chapter 13). And some Christians believe Jesus will snatch up Christians at the end of the Tribulation at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:11-21).

Takeaways...

1. The Rapture should bring you comfort.
2. At the Rapture, Jesus will snatch up all Christians (dead and alive) to Heaven.
3. Only God knows when the Rapture will occur.
4. God wants us to keep working and witnessing until we die or Jesus snatches us to Heaven.