

# 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 Commentary

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JESUS IS COMING AGAIN  
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1 Thessalonians Overview				
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LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD	
Personal Reflections History			Practical Instructions Hortatory	
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<b>1</b> <b>Salvation</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Service</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Sanctification</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Sorrow</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Sobriety</b>
Paul Commends Spiritual Growth	Paul Finds the Church	Strengthening of the Church	Directions for Spiritual Growth	Holy Living in Light of Day of the Lord
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD				

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [epeita hemeis oi zontes](#) (PAPMPN) [hoi perileipomenoi](#) (PPPMPN) [ama sun autois arpagesometha](#) (1PFPI) [en nephelais eis apantesin tou kuriou eis aera; kai houtos pantote sun kurio esometha.](#) (1PFMI)

**Amplified:** Then we, the living ones who remain [on the earth], shall simultaneously be caught up along with [the resurrected dead] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so always (through the eternity of the eternities) we shall be with the Lord! ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** and then we who are alive, who survive, will be caught up by the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air. ([Westminster Press](#))

**Milligan:** And only after that shall we who are surviving be suddenly caught up in the clouds with them to meet the Lord in the air. Thus shall we ever be with the Lord. (St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1908)

**NET:** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

**NLT:** Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still living on the earth will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And after that we shall be with him for ever. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** then as for us who are living and who are left behind, together with them we shall be snatched away forcibly in [masses of saints having the appearance of] clouds for a welcome-meeting with the Lord in the lower atmosphere. And thus always shall we be with the Lord. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** then we who are living, who are remaining over, together with them shall be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in air, and so always with the Lord we shall be;

**THEN WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN: epeita hemeis oi zontes (PAP) hoi perileipomenoi (PPPMPN):**

- 1Th 4:15; 1Co 15:52
- [Bibliography of Works on Pretribulationalism by Dennis M. Swanson](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: What Happens to Christians Who Die Before Jesus Comes?-Pt 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Death and Christian Grief](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE STILL ALIVE ON EARTH?

**Literally** this is rendered "Then we the living, the remaining."

**Then** (1899)(**epeita** from **epi** = upon + **eita** = point in time following another point) is an adverb of time and order which marks the sequence of one thing after another and can be rendered: then, thereupon, next, moreover then, thereafter, after that. **Epeita** is a point of time following another point. Subsequently, soon afterward. In Jas 4:14 our life is described as a vapor that appears for a little while and **then** (**epeita**) vanishes away." In 1Th 4:17 clearly **then** (**epeita**) is describing sequence of events.

**BDAG** adds **epeita** means (1) being next in order of time, then, thereupon. (a). without specific indication of chronological sequence Mk 7:5 v.l.; Lk 16:7; Gal 1:21; Js 4:14; (b). together w. indications of chronological sequence (1Cor 15:46; 1 Th 4:17; He b 7:27; 1Co 15:23, 15:6) (2). being next in position of an enumeration of items, (Heb 7:2, Jas 3:17, 1Co 12:28)

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **epeita** means "thereupon," "therefore," or "then." It marks the sequence from one thing to another. It also means "immediately" or "afterwards" when emphatically expressing an event immediately following another. Sometimes it means "therefore" or "then" (like *oun* [3631]), indicating causal succession of events. In the papyri **epeita** means "next" or "then." It may mark the chronological sequence of events or it may be used to give the successive order of things. The three uses of **epeita** in the Septuagint (Numbers 19:19; Isaiah 16:2; 4 Maccabees 6:3) do not translate a specific Hebrew word. In the New Testament

epeita is used primarily to indicate a succession of events (Luke 16:7; James 4:14). Often it is used with prōton (4270), "first," to denote a logical order or priority: "And God hath set some in the church, first (prōton) apostles, secondarily prophets ... after that (epeita) miracles, then epeita gifts of healings ..." (1 Corinthians 12:28; see also Hebrews 7:2). Both ideas of priority and sequence can be present (1 Corinthians 15:23, 46; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

**Epeita** - 16x in NT - after(2), then(14). Lk. 16:7; Jn. 11:7; 1Co. 12:28; 1Co. 15:6; 1Co. 15:7; 1Co. 15:23; 1Co. 15:46; Gal. 1:18; Gal. 1:21; Gal. 2:1; 1Th 4:17; Heb. 7:2; Heb. 7:27; Jas. 3:17; Jas. 4:14. Used one time in the Septuagint - Isa 16:2.

Although **then** denotes "succession in enumeration," it does not necessarily indicate any long interval and in fact 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 makes clear that no appreciable interval between the raising of the dead in Christ and the transformation of the living saints is implied.

Behold, I tell you a mystery (previously hidden truth now divinely revealed - seemusterion); we shall not all sleep (physically die), but we shall all be changed, 52 in a **moment** (Greek = atomos [a = without + tome = a cut, cf temno = to divide] = indivisible, English "atom"), in the **twinkling** (Greek = rhipe = A quick motion, such as a fling or toss, blink of eye) of an eye, at **the last trumpet** (see discussion); for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **imperishable** (not subject to decay or death), and **we shall be changed** (made otherwise - to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place, to exchange one thing for another). (1 Corinthians 15:51-52+)

**We who are alive and remain** - The fact that Paul uses the first person plural (**we**) (see discussion of use of "we" in v15) strongly suggests that he fully expected to meet the Lord in the air. In other words the great apostle anticipated the imminent return of His Lord. The English word **imminent** is interesting as it is derived from the Latin verb **imminere** (from *in* = upon, towards + *minere* = to project) which means to overhang. One gets the picture of the return of the Bridegroom to rapture His Bride as an event which "overhangs" the Church (in a positive and motivating sense) (see Tony Garland's discussion of [Marriage of the Lamb](#) especially [The Jewish Wedding Analogy](#)). Certainly, if the Bride lived with this constant mindset, she would seek to keep her linen bright and clean, which are the righteous acts of the saints (see **note Revelation 19:8**) (See [doctrine of imminency](#))

**Alive** (2198) (**zao**) means literally to be alive physically thus describing natural physical life as in this verse - Those who are still (continually = present tense) alive at the parousia.

**Remain** (4035) (**perileipo** from **perí** = an intensifier + **leipo** = to leave, lack) is a verb which means to leave over or to leave all around. In the **passive voice** (as in this verse) it means to **be** left remaining, here referring to believers alive at Christ's parousia. It is interesting that **Left Behind** is also the title of a popular novel (circa 2000 AD) on the end times that begins with the Rapture of believers. In marked contrast, once the Rapture has occurred, the ones **Left Behind** will be unbelievers, including those who *professed* faith in Christ but never *possessed* genuine faith in Him as evidenced by their supernaturally changed lives and their new desire to "eat" and obey God's Word and to be led by His Spirit.

**SHALL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR: hama sun autois harpagesometha (1PFPI) en nephelais eis apantesin tou kuriou eis aera:**

- 1Ki 18:12; 2Ki 2:11,16; Acts 8:39; 2Cor 12:2-4; Rev 11:12; 12:5) (Mt 26:64; Mk 14:62; Acts 1:9; Rev 1:7
- [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: What Happens to Christians Who Die Before Jesus Comes?-Pt 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Death and Christian Grief](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE RAPTURE

**Does Paul really describe a "rapture"?** That seems to be the question of many skeptics and scoffers. They argue that the word "rapture" is no where to be found in Scripture. In addressing their argument, it behooves us to keep in mind that the **Latin Vulgate** was the primary Bible translation utilized for one thousand years preceding the Reformation. In short, the Latin Vulgate "reigned" as the primary Bible translation longer than any other translation. In the **Latin Vulgate** the Greek word **harpazo** was translated "*rapimur*" which is clearly related to our English terms "*Rapture*" or "*raptured*". So those detractors who argue that the term **Rapture** does not appear in the Bible are only expressing their ignorance and are obviously unaware of the prominence of the Latin

Vulgate translation in church history. Setting aside the argument that the word **rapture** (which is true) is not found in modern translations, the more important question is what does the original Greek word **harpazo** actually mean? Clearly it is a verb in the original Greek and verbs generally convey action. What is the picture conveyed by harpazo? ([Gillian Welch & David Rawlings - I'll Fly Away](#))

**Shall Be Caught up** (726) (**harpazo** from **haireô** = take, in NT only in **middle voice** = **haireomai** = to take for oneself, to choose; akin to **airo** = to raise up) means to snatch up or way, to seize or seize upon, to steal (see comparison to **klepto** below), to catch away or up, to pluck, to pull.

**Harpazo** means to take suddenly and vehemently, often with violence and speed or quickly and without warning. The idea is to take by force with a sudden swoop and usually indicates a force which cannot be resisted. In eschatological terms (future events, prophetically related) as in the present verse, **harpazo** refers to what is often known as the "rapture" (Latin = *raptura* = seizing or Latin = *rapio* = seize, snatch)

**Harpazo** thus can be translated by the verb to **rapture** which describes the act of conveying or transporting a person from one place to another or from one sphere of existence to another. The English word **rapture** can also convey the idea of ecstasy as with one who is "carried out of" oneself with joy, but that is not the primary sense conveyed by the NT usage here in 1 Thessalonians.

**Harpazo** is future **passive** (so called "divine passive" in this context - the action is exerted by outside divine force) **indicative** (this is the mood of certainty which describes a real event, stating that this is a future fact which we can count on!) first person plural (implying in context not just individuals but many individuals, specifically the true church composed of all the believers of the church age).

**The picture of individuals being snatched up and away is seen in four NT uses** (see the verses below)...

- (1) Of the act of the Spirit of the Lord snatching Phillip away (Acts 8:39)
- (2) Of Paul being caught up to the third heaven (Paradise) (2Corinthians 12:2,4)
- (3) Of believers being caught up to be with the Lord (1Th 4:17-note)
- (4) Of the "child" (Jesus) being caught up to God (Re 12:5-note)

**Harpazo** conveys the idea of force suddenly exercised, and also well rendered by the English verb to **snatch** (to seize, take or grasp something {someone} abruptly or hastily with emphasis on the idea of suddenness or quickness)

The related word **harpagē** (724) refers to robbery, plunder or seizing of one's possessions (Mt 23:25 = describing scribes and Pharisees who were "full of robbery" {greediness}, Lk 11:39, Heb 10:34). The adjective **harpax** (727) is used 6 times in the NT (Mt 7:15 = "ravenous {rapacious} wolves"; Lk 18:11 = "swindlers", "extortionists", "embezzlers"; 1Cor 5:10; 5:11; 6:10 = same meaning as in Lk 18:11)

The uses of **harpazo** in the Gospels refer to robbery or the unlawful snatching away of something or someone (see below - Jn 10:12, 28, 29; Mt 11:12; 12:29; 13:19).

**Harpazo** was used of rescuing one from a situation of threatening danger as in "snatching them out of the fire" (see Jude 1:23 below)

**Harpazo** in secular Greek was used to describe the action of a wolf which entered a flock of sheep and suddenly *snatched up* (harpazo) a lamb. (see John 10:12 below)

**Moulton and Milligan** note that **harpazo** was often found in secular Greek in petitions complaining of robbery.

**Harpazo** as noted can convey the sense of "to steal" but it differs from another Greek word **klepto** (English = kleptomania {from kleptes = thief} refers to a strong impulse to steal) referring to stealing secretly or with stealth whereas **harpazo** denotes robbing with a more violent action.

**Harpazo** is also used to mean forcibly to seize upon, snatch away, or take to oneself (see below Mt 11:12, John 6:15, Acts 23:10)

**Harpazo** is used 13 times in the NT...

**Matthew 11:12** And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men **take it by force** (grasping in the sense of either resisting or laying claim to the Kingdom as their own - see comment).

**Comment:** This is a difficult verse to interpret and can mean that evil forces from without sought to violently

seize and destroy the kingdom of God or that persons who were ready for the advent of the King responded vigorously to His announcement, "violently" seeking to enter the kingdom of God,. The latter interpretation implies the difficulty with which one enters His kingdom {cp the related passage Luke 16:16 which has the second meaning.} Both interpretations indicate that John the Baptist's initial announcement of the coming King and Kingdom met with a "violent reaction" either by evil opponents or by enthusiastic supporters.

**Matthew 13:19** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and **snatches away** (robs, plunders, swoops in and steals away) what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

**John 6:15** Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and **take Him by force**, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

**Comment:** This use of harpazo illustrates the violent nature of the seizing - here is a forcibly taking of someone.

**John 10:12** He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf **snatches** them, and scatters them.

**John 10:28** and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one **shall snatch** them out of My hand. **10:29** My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to **snatch** them out of the Father's hand.

**Comment:** Here harpazo underscores the believer's security in Christ, speaking of the impossibility of anyone snatching a believer out of the hands of Jesus or His Father.

**Acts 8:39** And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **snatched Philip away** (from the presence of the Ethiopian eunuch and drag off to a different place); and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.

**Comment:** This "rapture" entails the movement from one place on earth to another, in contrast to the "rapture" in 2Cor 12:2,4, 1 Thes 4:17, Rev 12:5, all of which refer to one being caught up to a supernatural world.

**Acts 23:10** And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and **take him away from them by force**, and bring him into the barracks.

**2 Corinthians 12:2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was **caught up** to the third heaven... 4 was **caught up** into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

**1 Thessalonians 4:17** (note) 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.

**Jude 1:23** save others, **snatching** them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

[Revelation 12:5](#) (note) And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child **was caught up** (passive voice indicating God did the snatching) to God and to His throne. (**Comment:** This event is described in Acts 1:9-11 {these verses do not use harpazo} where Jesus was taken up into the cloud).

**Harpazo** is used 34 times in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX)

Ge 37:33; Lev. 6:4; 19:13; Deut. 28:31; Jdg. 21:21, 23; 2 Sam. 23:21; Job 20:19; 24:2, 9, 19; Ps. 7:2; 10:9; 22:13; 50:22; 69:4; 104:21; Isa. 10:2; Ezek 18:7, 12, 16, 18; 19:3, 6; 22:25, 27; Hos. 5:14; 6:1; Amos 1:11; 3:4; Mic. 3:2; 5:8; Nah. 2:12

A number of the uses of **harpazo** in the LXX translate the Hebrew word meaning to tear ([taraph; 2963](#)) (as of beasts of prey, tear to pieces - Ge 37:33, Ps 7:2, 50:22, Hos 5:14, 6:1) which brings out the violent aspect of harpazo. None of the LXX uses of **harpazo** convey the same sense of rapture as found here in 1 Thessalonians, although there are **two OT "raptures"**, the first of **Enoch** who "walked with God and he was not for God took him" (Ge 5:24) and the other of **Elijah** who "went up by a whirlwind to heaven" (2Ki 2:11).

Below are some representative uses of **harpazo** in the LXX...

**Leviticus 6:4** then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he **took by robbery** (Hebrew = [gazel](#), [1497](#); Lxx = harpazo), or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him, or the lost thing which he found,

**Job 20:19** "For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has **seized** (Hebrew = [gazel](#), [1497](#); Lxx = harpazo) a house which he has not built.

**Job 24:2** "Some remove the landmarks; They **seize** (Hebrew = [gazel](#), [1497](#); Lxx = harpazo) and devour flocks... 24:9 Others **snatch** (Hebrew = [gazel](#), [1497](#); Lxx = harpazo) the orphan from the breast, And against the poor they take a pledge.

**Psalm 10:9** He (the wicked man) lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; He lurks to **catch** (Hebrew = [chataph](#), [2414](#); Lxx = harpazo) the afflicted; He **catches** (Hebrew = [chataph](#), [2414](#); Lxx = harpazo) the afflicted when he draws him into his net.

**To meet** - This phrase indicates that the Lord will be coming from one direction and we shall be coming from another to meet together in the air! What a glorious day that will be!

**Martin Luther** said he only had two days on his calendar—today and “that day.”

**To meet the Lord** - Literally reads "into a meeting with the Lord."

#### **Rapture Related Resources:**

- Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming;
- [The Rapture Question - Andy Woods](#)
- [Up With the Son - 30' Video Summary of the Rapture](#) - Andy Woods
- [Why a Pretribulational Rapture?](#) - Richard Mayhue
- [The Rapture and the Book of Revelation](#) - Keith Essex
- [The Rapture in Revelation 3:10](#) - Jeffrey L Townsend
- [The Apocalypse Of John And The Rapture Of The Church: A Reevaluation](#) - 60 page article
- [Is The Return of Christ Premillennial?](#) - Dr John Walvoord
- [New Testament Words for the Lord's Coming](#) - Dr John Walvoord
- [The Rapture and the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5](#) - Dr John Walvoord
- [The Rapture: A Message for Controversy - Will the Church go through the Tribulation?](#) - (audio and transcript) Bill McRae
- [The Rapture: A Message of Comfort \(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18\)](#) - (audio and transcript) Bill McRae
- [The Rapture: The Signs of His Coming, Part Two - The Condition of the Professing Church \(Revelation 17\)](#) - (audio and transcript) Bill McRae
- [The Rapture: The Signs of His Coming, Part One - 7 signs](#)(Daniel 9, Matthew 24)
- [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 What is the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming?](#)
- [What is the rapture of the church?](#)
- [How can I be ready to be caught up in the rapture?](#)
- [How can I be sure I won't be left behind in the rapture?](#)
- [Will there be a partial rapture?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pretribulational view of the rapture \(pretribulationism\)?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the posttribulational view of the rapture \(posttribulationism\)?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-wrath view of the rapture?](#)
- [When is the Rapture going to occur in relation to the Tribulation?](#)
- [Yes, Christians Can Believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture \(page 2\)](#)
- [What is the Tribulation? How do we know the Tribulation will last seven years?](#)
- [Who are the dead in Christ in 1 Thessalonians 4:16?](#)

**Meet** ([529](#)) (**apantesis** from **apantáo** from **apó** = from + **antáo** = to come opposite to, to meet especially to meet face to face) describes a meeting especially a meeting of two who are coming from different directions.

In Greek culture the word had a technical meaning to describe the visits of dignitaries to cities where the visitor would be formally met by the citizens, or a deputation of them, who had gone out from the city for this purpose and would then be ceremonially escorted back into the city. **Apantesis** was often used to suggest the meeting of a dignitary or king, a famous person, describing people rushing to meet the one who was coming.

**Hiebert** has a similar comment on the meaning of **apantesis** writing that "In Hellenistic Greek the expression had become a kind of

technical term denoting "a ceremonial meeting with a person of position. In papyrus usage it was used of an official delegation going forth to meet a newly appointed magistrate, or other dignitary, upon his arrival in their district." Hogg and Vine remark, "Almost invariably the word suggests that those who go out to meet him intend to return to their starting place with the person met." But Thomas feels that "usage of the noun in LXX as well as differing features of the present context (e.g., Christians being snatched away rather than advancing on their own to meet the visitor) is sufficient to remove this passage from the technical Hellenistic sense of the word. A meeting in the air is pointless unless the saints continue on to heaven with the Lord who has come out to meet them (Milligan, p. 61)." (Ibid)

**NIDNTT** says **apantesis** was a "technical term for the solemn meeting of important persons."

The picture portrayed by the preposition *eis* (unto, into) is that the meeting occurs between the Lord coming from one direction and believers coming from another to meet together in the air.

There are 3 uses of **apantesis** in the NT...

**Matthew 25:6** "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to **meet** him.'

**Acts 28:15** And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to **meet** us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

**1 Thessalonians 4:17** (note) 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.

There are 25 occurrences of **apantesis** in the Septuagint (LXX) (1 Sam. 4:1; 6:13; 9:14; 13:10, 15; 15:12; 16:4; 21:1; 25:32, 34; 30:21; 2 Sam. 6:20; 19:25; 1 Chr. 12:17; 14:8; 19:5; 2 Chr. 12:11; 15:2; 19:2; 20:17; 28:9; Est. 8:12; Jer. 27:3; 41:6; 51:31)

**1 Samuel 4:1** Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to **meet** (Lxx = *apantesis*) the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek.

**1 Samuel 6:13** Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see (Lxx = *apantesis* = "to meet it") it.

**1 Samuel 13:10** And it came about as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, that behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to **meet** (Lxx = *apantesis*) him and to greet him.

**1 Samuel 25:32** Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to **meet** (Lxx = *apantesis*) me,

**2 Chronicles 20:17** 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to **face** (Lxx = *apantesis* = meet) them, for the LORD is with you."

**Jeremiah 51:31** One courier runs to **meet** (Lxx = *apantesis*) another, And one messenger to **meet** (Lxx = *apantesis*) another, To tell the king of Babylon That his city has been captured from end to end;

**Together** (260) (**hama**) is a marker of simultaneous occurrence, at the same time, denoting the coincidence of two actions in time. Hama describes a point of time which is emphatically simultaneous with another point of time. Here in verse 17 **hama** depicts a simultaneous snatching up of bodies of both believers who are still alive and believers who had fallen asleep in Christ and had been resurrected prior to being raptured.

**With** (4862) (**sun**) speaks of intimacy in contrast to **meta** which speaks of nearness without the idea of intimacy. An excellent illustration of this difference is the two thieves on the Cross. The believing thief was crucified (physically but more importantly spiritually) with (sun) Christ (see word study on crucified with = *sustaroo*) while the other thief was crucified (physically next to) with Christ. The first thief experienced intimate union with Christ, while the second experienced only close proximity to Christ, the result of which was eternal separation from Christ. (See [Spurgeon's thoughts on sun/syn](#))

Regarding the phrase **with them** (*hama sun*) **Hiebert** writes that this is "an unusual expression in the Greek (occurring again in 1 Thessalonians 5:10) meaning here '**simultaneously, with them**. The two groups will, united as one company, arise to meet the Lord. It implies the full association and equality of the two groups. For the living it will mean not only recognition of, but reunion with, their departed loved ones. (Ibid) (Bolding added)

This verse leaves no doubt that the believers who are alive at the time of the first aspect of the Second Advent when the Lord comes **for** His saints (for His Bride) will be caught up together with the resurrected dead.

**In the clouds** - or "amid clouds."

**Clouds** (3507) (**nephele** from **nephos** = a mass of clouds) describes a visible mass of particles of condensed vapor suspended in the atmosphere. The **clouds** form the element with which those caught up are surrounded. That literal **clouds** are meant seems clear from Acts 1:9 where they are associated with Christ's ascension, as here with the ascension of His saints. The "second phase" of His Second Advent (see chart and discussion -Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming )

**Air** (109)(**aer** from **aemi** = breathe unconsciously, respire) is the atmosphere with the clouds, "air" (as naturally circumambient), the celestial air surrounding the earth. The meeting with the Lord takes place "in the air," between heaven and earth. In five of its seven occurrences in the New Testament the word **aer** means the atmosphere.

The Greeks believed it to be the substance that filled the space between the earth and moon. They considered it to be thick and misty in contrast to the very pure, higher substance which they called aither, ether.

**Reginald Showers** in his treatise on the Rapture notes that...

The Scriptures present **six raptures**. Four have already taken place. Two are still to come. This book will examine one of those raptures: a major future event foretold in the Bible, namely, the coming of Christ to take His bride, the church. Most theologians call this "the Rapture"—from the Latin verb *raptō*, which means to seize and carry off,—because 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states that the church will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. Other theologians have called this event "the Translation," taking that name from the Latin word *translatio* (transporting, transferring) because Christ will transport the church from one location to another at that time.

The **four raptures that have taken place** include when both **Enoch** and **Elijah** were taken up from earth to heaven without experiencing death (Ge 5:24; He 11:5 {note}; 2 Ki 2:1, 11), when the **Lord Jesus** ascended to heaven after His death and resurrection (Mk. 16:19; Acts 1:9, 10, 11; Re 12:5-[note](#)), and when **Paul** referred to the rapture of a man (probably Paul himself) to the third heaven (2Co 12:2, 3, 4+). Paul used the same verb there, translated caught up, as is used in Re 12:5-[note](#) for the Lord's ascension and in 1Thessalonians 4:17 for the church's Rapture. The other future rapture will occur when the **two witnesses of the future Tribulation period** ascend to heaven after God has resurrected them from death (Re 11:3-[note](#), Re 11:11-[note](#); Re 11:12-[note](#)). ([Maranatha Our Lord, Come! . Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc](#))

#### AND THUS WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH: kai houtos pantote sun kurio esometha (FMI):

- Ps 16:11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24; Isa 35:10; 60:19,20; Jn 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; 2Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 7:14, 15, 16, 17; 21:3, 4, 5, 6, 7,22,23; 22:3, 4, 5
- [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: What Happens to Christians Who Die Before Jesus Comes?-Pt 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Death and Christian Grief](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### FOREVER IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST!

**Always** (3842)(**pantote** from **pás** = all + **tóte** = then) at all times: always , ever.

**Hiebert** adds that "The important thing is not the place but the fact of the permanent union with the Lord. Wherever the Lord is, there His glorified church will be. (Ibid)

**With** (4862)(**sun/syn**) as noted above speaks of intimate union or as Ellicott puts it "not merely an accompanying, but [acohereance](#) with "the Lord." (See [Spurgeon on sun/syn](#))

**Hiebert** adds this quote "The entire content and worth of heaven, the entire blessedness of life eternal, is for Paul embraced, in the one thought of being united with Jesus, his Savior and Lord. This will be the acme of eternal bliss. (Findlay quoting Bornemann) (Ibid)

In summary, if one interprets Scripture literally, it would be virtually impossible to disregard Paul's clear teaching on **The Rapture**, one of the most monumental events in all of human history.

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**Spurgeon's** comments on the phrase "**with Him forever**" (from [sermon by the same name](#) or listen to [audio version](#)) with particular



emphasis on the conjunction **WITH** which is not meta but [sun/syn](#) -

Now we come to our third point, and shall consider what, for want of a better word, I entitle **ACOHERENCE**. Those who are acquainted with the Greek language know that the **"WITH"** here is not **meta**, which signifies being in the same place with a person, but [sun/syn](#) which goes very much further, and implies a **coherence, the two who are with each other are intimately connected.**

Let me show you what I mean. **We are to be forever with the Lord**; now, the Christian's life is all along like the life of his Lord, and so it is a life with Christ. He was in all things with his brethren, and **grace makes us to be with ([sun/syn](#)) Him.**

Just hurriedly look at your spiritual experience and your Lord's life, and see the parallel. When you were new born as a Christian you were born as Jesus Christ was, for you were born of the Holy Ghost. What happened after that? The devil tried to destroy the new life in you, just as Herod tried to kill your Lord; you were **WITH Christ** in danger, early and imminent. You grew in stature and in grace, and while yet grace was young, you staggered those who were about you with the things you said, and did, and felt, for they could not understand you; even thus when he went up to the temple our Lord amazed the doctors who gathered around him. The **Spirit of God** rested upon you, not in the same measure, but still as a matter of fact it did descend upon you as it did upon your Lord.

You have been **WITH Him** in Jordan's stream, and have received the divine acknowledgment that you are indeed the son of God.

Your Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted; and you too have been tempted of the devil.

You have been **WITH the Lord** all along, from the first day until now. If you have been by grace enabled to live as you should, you have trodden the separated path **WITH Jesus**; you have been in the world, but not of it, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Therefore you have been despised; you have had to take your share of being unknown and misrepresented, because you are even as he was in to be world. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (1Jn 3:1) As he was here to serve, you have been **WITH Him** as a servant, you have carried his yoke and counted it an easy load. (Mt 11:29-30) You have been crucified to the world **WITH Him** (Gal 6:14); you know the meaning of his cross, and delight to bear it after him. You are dead to the world **WITH Him**, and wish to be as one buried to it. You have already in your measure partaken of his resurrection, and are living in newness of life (Ro 6:4-5).

Your life-story is still to be like the life-story of your Lord, only painted in miniature. **The more you watch the life of Christ the more clearly you will see the life of a spiritual man depicted in it, and the more clearly will you see what the saints' future will be.** You have been **WITH Christ** in life (Ro 6:4), and you will be with him when you come to die. You will not die the expiatory death which fell to his lot, but you will die feeling that "it is finished," and you will breathe out your soul, saying, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit."

Then our Lord went to paradise, and you will go there too. You shall enjoy a sojourn where he spent his interval in the disembodied state,. You shall be **WITH Him**, and like him (1Jn 3:2, Php 3:20), and then like him you shall rise when your third morning cometh. "After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (Hos 6:2KJV) "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." (Isaiah 26:19) You shall also ascend as Christ did. Do you catch the thought? How did he ascend? In clouds. "A cloud received him out of their sight," (Acts 1:9) and a cloud shall receive you. You shall be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall you be ever with the Lord, in the sense of being like to him, walking **WITH Him** in experience, and passing through like events. That likeness shall continue forever and for ever. Our lives shall run parallel with that of our Lord.

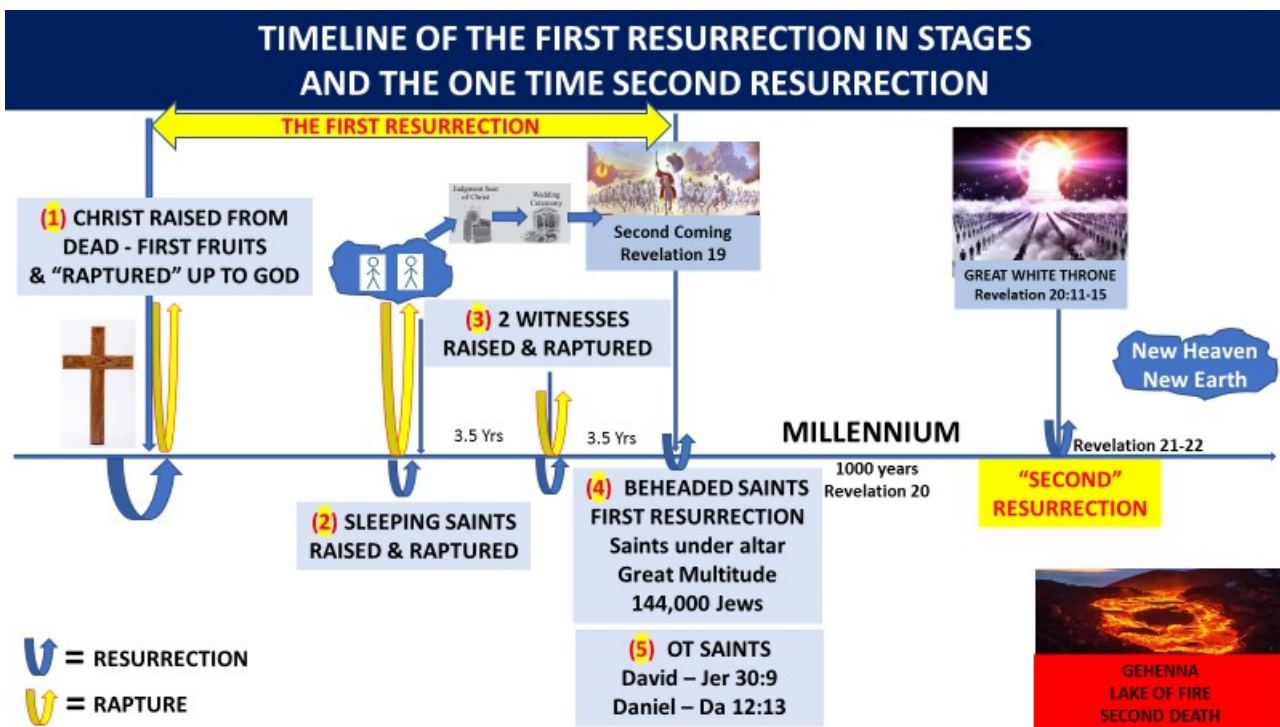
Think then, beloved, we are to be like Christ as to our character; we are to be with the Lord by sharing his moral and spiritual likeness. Conformed to his image, we shall be adorned with his beauty. When the mother of Darius saw two persons entering her pavilion, she being a prisoner bowed to the one whom she supposed to be Alexander. It turned out to be Hyphestion, the King's favourite. Upon discovering that it was Hyphestion the lady humbly begged Alexander's pardon for paying obeisance to the wrong person, but Alexander answered, "You have not mistaken, Madam, for he also is Alexander," meaning that he loved him so much that he regarded him as his other self. Our Lord looks on his beloved as one with himself, and makes them like himself. You remember, brethren, how John bowed down before one of his fellow servants, the prophets in heaven. It was a great blunder to make, but I dare say you and I will be likely to make the same, for the saints are so like their Lord. Know ye not that "we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is"? Christ will rejoice to see them all covered with the glory which his Father has given him. He will not be ashamed to call them brethren.

Those poor people of his, who were so full of infirmity, and mourned over it so much, they shall be so like him that they shall be at once seen to be his brethren. Where shall such favored ones be found? We shall be with him in the sense that we shall be partakers of all the blessedness and glory which our adorable Lord now enjoys. We shall be accepted together with him. Is he the beloved of the Lord? Does his Father's heart delight in him, as well it may? Behold ye also shall be called Hephzibah, for his delight shall be in you. You shall be beloved of the Father's soul. Is he enriched with all manner of blessings beyond conception? So shall you be, for he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen us in him. Is Christ exalted? Oh, how loftily is he lifted up to sit upon a glorious high throne for ever! But you shall sit upon his throne with him and share his exaltation as you have shared his humiliation. Oh, the delight of thus being joint heirs with Christ, and with him in the possession of all that he possesses. What is heaven? It is the place which his love suggested, which his genius invented, which his bounty provided, which his royalty has adorned, which his wisdom has prepared, which he himself glorifies; in that heaven you are to be with him for ever. You shall dwell in the King's own palace. Its gates of pearl and streets of gold shall not be too good for you. You who love him are to abide for ever with him, not near him in a secondary place, as a servant lives at the lodge gate of his master's mansion, but with him in the self-same palace in the metropolis of the universe.

**In a word, believers are to be identified with Christ forever.**

That seems to me to be the very life and essence of the text; **WITH Him** forever, that is, identified **WITH Him** forever. (from [Forever with the Lord](#) or listen to [audio version](#))

## The First Resurrection and the Second Resurrection



In order to better understand the Biblical nomenclature regarding the resurrection associated with the Rapture, it is important to give a brief summary of the two main categories of Biblical resurrections.

In the **gospel of John**, Jesus taught there were **two general categories of resurrection**, one of believers and one of unbelievers...

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds (good deeds do not save but are evidence of genuine saving faith in Christ - faith is the "root" and "good deeds" are the "root") to a **resurrection of life**, those who committed the evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgment**. (**John 5:28-29**) (**Comment:** From the following schematic timeline you will notice that the resurrection of unbelievers follows the last identifiable resurrection of believers by 1000 years, assuming one interprets the 1000 years of Revelation 20 literally).

In **1 Corinthians 15**, the "Resurrection Chapter", Paul gives us the prototype for all subsequent resurrections of believers, explaining that...

now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who are asleep. (**1 Corinthians 15:20+**)

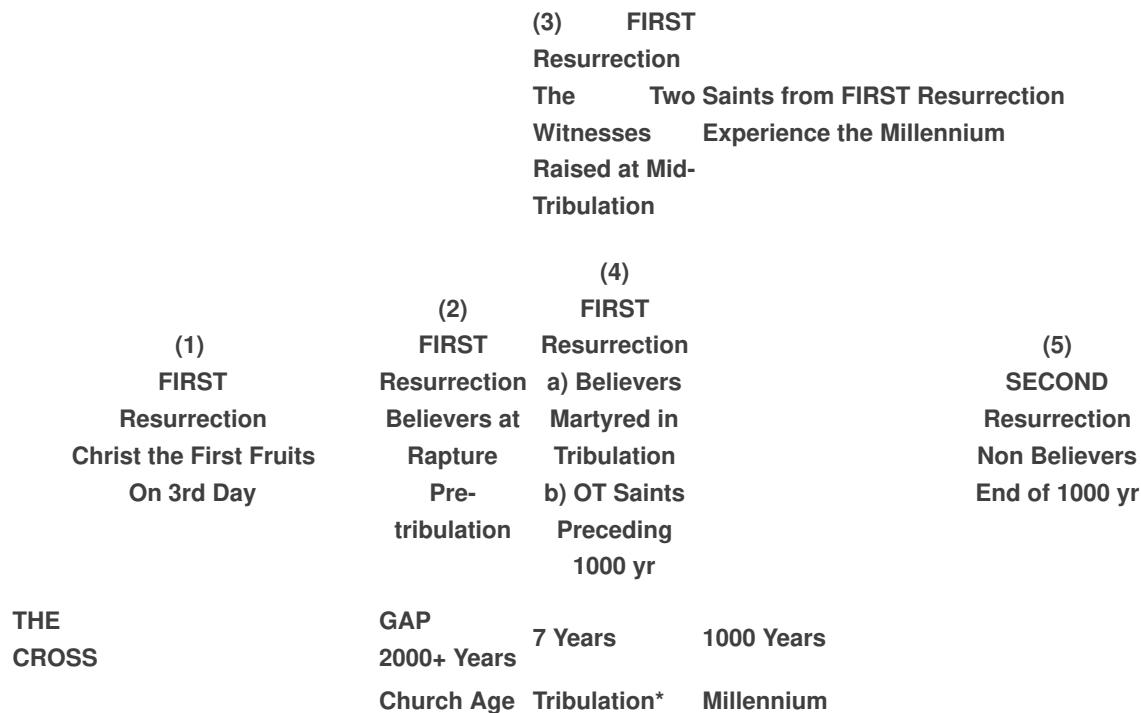
**Comment:** In Leviticus 23:10-14, the first fruits of grain harvested were offered by the priests to Jehovah as a sign and a promise of a greater harvest to come. In the same way, Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits" assures that all those who have placed their faith in Him will be part of the first resurrection, which is the greater harvest of all believers, both OT and NT. The exception is those believers who are alive when Christ returns to Rapture the Church will not experience physical death and will not require bodily resurrection.

In **Revelation 20**, John uses the term **first resurrection** writing...

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the **first resurrection**; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (See **note Revelation 20:6**)

Study the schematic timeline below and note that there are two general categories of resurrections. Then read the explanatory notes that follow.

### THE TWO RESURRECTIONS



**\*Note:** The word "**Tribulation**" is never specifically used in Scripture to designate the last 7 years, Daniel's 70th week, but will be used in these notes because the term is so firmly entrenched in Christian jargon. Last 3.5 years is designated the Great Tribulation.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES:** The **First Resurrection** concerns only believers and is composed of several distinct "stages" at different times. Note that all believers (not just saints martyred during the Great Tribulation) will reign with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom. The **Second Resurrection** deals only with unbelievers and occurs in a single "stage" or as a one time event. Both the First and Second Resurrections refer to **physical** or **bodily resurrection**, not spiritual resurrection.

(1) **The prototype resurrection forming the basis of the First Resurrection** - Christ the first fruits of all subsequent resurrections of believers (1Co 15:20+)

(2) **The Second "stage" of the First Resurrection** - Believers who have died during the Church Age will be resurrected at the time the Lord returns to Rapture His Bride, the Church. (1 Th 4:13-18+, 1Co 15:50-53+, cp Jn 14:3)

(3) **The Third "stage" of the First Resurrection** - The two witnesses who are killed in Revelation 11 are raised and then went up to heaven (Rev 11:11, 12+)

(4a) **The Fourth "stage" of the First Resurrection** - After the Great Tribulation, believers who have been

martyred will be resurrected to immortality (See notes regarding those who come out of Great Tribulation, some of which are undoubtedly martyred - Rev 7:9+; Rev 7:14+; see notes regarding saints martyred during the Great Tribulation some - Rev 20:4-6+)

**(4b) The Fourth "stage" of the First Resurrection** - After the time of Jacob's Distress or Trouble (= the Great Tribulation), the Old Testament saints will also be resurrected (see OT descriptions of resurrection - Daniel 12:1, 2, 13+, Isaiah 26:19, Job 19:26)

What Biblical basis is there for placing the resurrection of OT saints at the end of the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's distress? Jeremiah gives us a clue writing...

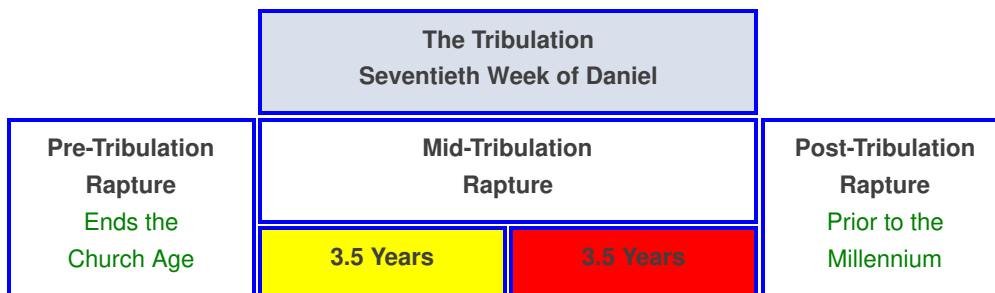
'Alas! for that day (not a literal day but a 3.5 year period that corresponds to the Great Tribulation) is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress (at which time there is a horrible time of persecution of Jews by the Satanically inspired Antichrist, a "Jewish holocaust" the likes of which the world has never seen, but one that will be cut short by the return of the Messiah), But he (Israel, the believing **remnant**) will be saved from it. And it shall come about on that day (what day? the day of the Lord's return - see description beginning in Re 19:11+),' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. (To reiterate, this day corresponds to the return of the Lord, who defeats the Antichrist and all Gentile powers arrayed against God, His saints and Israel) But **they** (this refers to those Jews who come to saving faith in the time of Jacob's distress - see Ro 11:25, 26, 27+) shall serve the LORD their God, and **David their king**, whom **I will raise up** for them. (Jeremiah 30:7, 8, 9+)

**Comment:** Note that these passages {also Ezekiel 37:24+} indicate that David himself will be resurrected and will actually reign over the earthly Israel during the millennial age. David's resurrection follows the defeat of the Gentiles at the end of the Great Tribulation which supports the premise that this period is the time when OT saints are resurrected.

**(5) The Second Resurrection** - After the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom all of the unbelieving dead will be resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne judgment and since their names are not found written in the book of life, they will be cast into the Lake of fire, which constitutes the Second Death, eternal separation away from the glory of God. (Re 20:11-note; Re 20:12-note; Re 20:13-note; Re 20:14-15+)

### WHEN DOES THE RAPTURE OCCUR?

Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post-Tribulation?



As discussed earlier, "tribulation" is the term commonly applied to the seven year period representing Daniel's 70th Week (Da 9:27-note), in spite of the fact that specific designation of the seven year period is never specifically referred to as **The Tribulation**. Jesus did identify the last 3.5 years of the seven year period as the **Great Tribulation** (Matthew 24:21, cp Re 7:14-note). Nevertheless, because the term **Tribulation** is so firmly entrenched in Christian teaching on the end times, it will be retained as a general reference to the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

**Showers** comments on why the views of the timing of the Rapture are so divergent among well meaning Christians - Why then do Christians come to different conclusions regarding the time of the Rapture of the church? The Scriptures do not give a specific statement concerning the time of this event. As a result, every person who studies the subject of the Rapture is forced to look for inferences of its time from different details presented in the Bible. (Showers, R. E. (1995). Maranatha Our Lord, Come! Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc) (See also his article [The Imminent Coming of Christ](#) and related [article](#), [article 2](#))

#### Related Resources:

- The Order of Resurrections - Table
- [Discussion of the Timing of Various Resurrections in Scripture](#)

- [What is the first resurrection? What is the second resurrection?](#)
- [What is the concept of a secret rapture?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-wrath view of the rapture?](#)
- [What is the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming?](#)
- [What is the rapture of the church?](#)
- [How can I be ready to be caught up in the rapture?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pretribulation view of the rapture \(pretribulationism\)?](#)
- [How can I be sure I won't be left behind in the rapture?](#)
- [What are the strengths and weaknesses of the posttribulation view of the rapture \(posttribulationism\)?](#)
- [When is the Rapture going to occur in relation to the Tribulation?](#)
- [Will there be a second chance for salvation after the Rapture?](#)

## PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

In regard to the timing of the Rapture, the most commonly held view among evangelicals is that the Rapture will be **Pre-Tribulation**. This view holds that Christ does not actually set foot on earth but that believers meet Him in the air as described in 1Th 4:13-18. At the end of the Tribulation, when the Lord returns, Christians who have been raptured will come with the Lord (see notes beginning at Re 19:11-[note](#); Re 19:14-[note](#)).

Observations which favor a Pre-Tribulation Rapture are listed below for your consideration. It should be noted that virtually all of these observations are of the indirect nature. In other words, there is no single passage of Scripture that unequivocally makes the statement "Jesus will return to rapture His Church before (or during the middle or after) the Seventieth Week of Daniel."

Nevertheless, in my opinion, the weight of "circumstantial" evidence makes a strong case for a pre-tribulation rapture. And yet as believers we will disagree over the timing of the rapture, but we should not let such disagreements produce divisions, the exact effect the enemy would seek to produce in the Body of Christ. The prayer of our Lord before He was crucified was for His disciples to be "perfected in unity (brought to complete unity), that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me." (Jn 17:23)

One thing all believers can agree on without reservation or argument is that **Jesus will return** (Bridegroom ) and will gather His Church (His Bride) to Himself and we will all be together in perfect union and harmony forever (1Th 4:18-note)! (see Tony Garland's discussion of [Marriage of the Lamb](#) especially [The Jewish Wedding Analogy](#)) Therefore the glorious truth that unites us, is far greater and more profound than the issues which might separate us, and so now as those who are called to live with an eternal mindset as **aliens and strangers** (1Pe 2:11-note), let us agree to amicably, lovingly disagree! With that introduction, the arguments for a mid-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture will not be discussed at any length and the interested reader is referred to other resources that deal more completely with the topic of the rapture, specifically the timing of this event.

See also paper by Richard L Mayhue - [Why a Pretribulation Rapture?](#)

1) **There are numerous allusions in Jesus' messages to the Seven Churches that His return could be imminent**(see note on [Imminency](#)) **and at any moment**. The point is that Jesus could return at any time and that nothing must transpire before He comes. Note also that another truth inherent in the teaching of imminency is that Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected. If the Rapture were to be mid-tribulation, the day of His return could be accurately calculated from date of the signing of the covenant between Antichrist and Israel, which signals the beginning of the Tribulation (Da 9:27-note).

**Remember** (present imperative - command to make this your lifestyle!) therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Don't delay! It is urgent!) and **do** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Don't delay! It is urgent!) the deeds you did at first; or else **I am coming to you**, and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent. (Re 2:5-[note](#))

**Repent** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Don't delay! It is urgent!) therefore; or else **I am coming to you quickly**, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Re 2:16-[note](#))

'Nevertheless what you have, **hold fast** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Don't delay! It is urgent!) until **I come**. (Re 2:15-[note](#))

'**Remember** (present imperative - command to make this your lifestyle!) therefore what you have received and

heard; and **keep** (present imperative - command to make this your lifestyle to keep in view, so as to watch over, give watchful care, continually guarding!) it, and **repent** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Don't delay! It is urgent!). If therefore you will not wake up, **I will come like a thief**, and **you will not know at what hour I will come upon you**. (Re 3:3-[note](#))

**I am coming quickly; hold fast** (present imperative - command to make this your lifestyle!) what you have, in order that no one take your crown. (Re 3:11-[note](#))

**Comment:** Salvation cannot be lost, but a reward can be - see 1Co 3:15; 2John 8.

## 2) Jesus message to the Church at Philadelphia is stated in such a way as to convey the sense of a future predictive, protective aspect.

**Revelation 3:10** Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep **(tereo)** you from **(ek)** the **hour** of testing, that **hour** which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth (earth dwellers is a unique term {not oikeo the usual verb = to dwell but katoikeo = to settle down, a more "intense" or committed dwelling, signifying that they are fixated on earth with absolutely no desire to be heaven bound} John uses **katoikeo** repeatedly {some 10 times beginning in Re 6:10-[note](#) through the last use in Rev 17:8-[note](#)} in Revelation 6-19 to describe **unbelievers** who remain on earth during that period and steadfastly refuse to repent and believe the gospel. In Rev 13:8-[note](#) and Rev 13:14-[note](#) these individuals are specifically defined as those "whose name has not been written in the book of life". (Rev 3:10-[note](#))

**Comment:** Admittedly Re 3:10-[note](#) is hotly debated in regard to whether or not it supports a pre-tribulation rapture. Without going into great detail, the debate is primarily focused on Jesus' intended meaning in His phrase "*I will keep you from the hour of testing*", some (especially those that favor a post-tribulation rapture) interpret this to mean Jesus will keep us "*through*" the testing, while the pre-tribulation camp interprets this phrase to mean that He will take the Church "*out of*" the time of testing. Despite attempts to suggest otherwise, the Greek preposition **ek** does have the meaning of **out of** or **from**. If Jesus had used other prepositions such as **dia** which means **through** and **en** which means **in** either of these prepositions would favor the post-tribulation view that the church was destined for wrath (this subject is discussed below - see 1Th 1:10-[note](#); 1Th 5:9-[note](#)). If you are interested in more in depth discussion on the preposition **ek** relative to Rev 3:10-[note](#) see the article entitled [The Rapture in Revelation 3:10 by Jeffrey L Townsend](#) - This is the same article that is in Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 137: Page 252, July-Sept, 1980) (Townsend also discusses John 17:15b at length, where Jesus asks His Father to "*keep {tereo} them from {ek} the evil*").

Also note the fact that multitudes of believers will be martyred during the last 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation (see Rev 7:9-[note](#); Rev 7:14-[note](#)) would hardly support the premise that Jesus "keeps" (guards, protects) believers during the Seven Year Tribulation, specifically the horrific last 3.5 years when the Antichrist rules the world (Rev 13:16-[note](#); Rev 13:17-[note](#); Rev 13:18-[note](#)).

In regard to the phrase **the hour of testing**, notice that in Greek the definite article "the" (tes) precedes **hour** which is a reference not just to any time of testing (believers are always being tested) but to a very specific identifiable period of testing. Jesus did not further identify this specific time, but in the **context** (context is critical for accurate interpretation) of the book of Revelation and with the knowledge that there is a very specific time of testing coming upon the entire world, the **Seventieth Week of Daniel** (Da 9:27-[note](#)), it is very reasonable to conclude that this figurative use of **the hour** (i.e., it is clearly not a literal 60 minute time period) refers to the time of the Tribulation. It is notable that there are some 12 uses of the word **hour** in the Revelation, chapter 14 having two uses that are relevant to this discussion...

**Revelation 14:7** and he (another angel flying in midheaven having an eternal gospel to preach to the entire world - see Re 14:6-[note](#)) said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the **hour** of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Re 14:7-[note](#))... **15** And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, because the **hour** to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." (Re 14:15-[note](#)).

**Comment:** These verses are chronologically at the **midpoint of the tribulation** (as determined by close observation and literal interpretation of the Revelation) and therefore would in fact lend some support to a **mid-tribulation rapture**, for the **hour** that the angelic messengers are referring to is God's final outpouring of wrath during the last 3.5 year **Great Tribulation**. On the other hand, this truth does not exclude a pre-tribulation rapture,

although it would argue against a post-tribulation rapture.

Notice who is the object of this world wide testing - the earth dwellers, not the faithful. Again this observation regarding the recipients of the testing is indirect support for the fact that the church will not be present. To be sure, many peoples will come to know Christ during the tribulation period (Re 7:9-[note](#); Re 7:14-[note](#)) and especially the **Great Tribulation**, but they are not benefactors of God's promise in Rev 3:10-[note](#) to keep them from **the hour of testing**. In fact, the world wide testing is undoubtedly an "impetus" that God's Spirit uses to awaken their dead souls to receive the life giving Gospel proclaimed throughout the world by the angel in mid-heaven (Rev 14:6-7-[note](#)). However, even as they receive Christ and refuse Antichrist, they do so with the realization that they will mark themselves as targets who are subject to martyrdom at the hands of the Antichrist!

**Townsend** sums up the arguments that Re 3:10-[note](#) supports a **pre-tribulation rapture** noting that...

Although **Revelation 3:10** describes the result of the rapture (i.e., the position and status of the church during the tribulation) and not the rapture itself, the details of the **hour of testing** just mentioned establish the Pretribulation rapture as the most logical deduction from this verse. The promise of preservation is **from** a period of time which will envelope the **whole world**. Only a Pretribulation rapture would remove the church completely from the earth and its time continuum. Thus the Pretribulation rapture is found to be a proper logical deduction from the data found in Rev 3:10-[note](#). ([Ibid](#))

To reiterate, although Rev 3:10-[note](#) supports a pre-tribulation rapture, it does not dogmatically make that statement and it is therefore open to honest criticism by those who hold other viewpoints on the timing of the Rapture.

**Keith Essex** has the following quote that summarizes thoughts on the rapture in Revelation 3:10 -

**Gerald Stanton** derives four facts from Rev 3:10.

**First**, this promise applies not only to one local assembly existing in the days of the apostle John but to the entire church of Jesus Christ. The constant refrain in all seven messages from Christ to these churches is "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

**Second**, the trial which is coming is not local, but is "about to come upon the whole world." The persecutions of the past were usually limited to one country or area. This trial must refer to the tribulation to come when all the world will be "*amazed and follow after the beast*" (Rev 13:3), and all who worship him will come under the wrath of God (Rev 13:8; 14:9-11).

**Third**, "**those who dwell on the earth**" (**katoikeo**) is not a suitable description for the members of the church (cf. Phil 3:20; Heb 11:13) (Ed: See study of this verb **katoikeo**).

**Fourth**, the grammar of  $\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$   $\epsilon\kappa$  (**tereo**  $\epsilon\kappa$ ), though not conclusive, favors 'removal from' the hour of trial. **Stanton** concludes, "In the words "I come quickly" [Rev 3:11] may be seen the rapture, and the reference to "thy crown" [Rev 3:11] suggests the **Bema seat judgment** to follow. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here, then, is a promise which clearly indicates the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church." (See Keith Essex's 25 page well documented paper [The Rapture and the Book of Revelation - TMSJ 13/2, Fall, 2002, pages 215-239](#))

### 3). In Revelation 2-3 we see repeated references to what the Spirit says to the churches...

He who **has an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit says to the churches. (Re 2:7-[note](#); Re 2:11-[note](#); Re 2:17-[note](#); Re 2:29-[note](#); Re 3:6-[note](#); Re 3:13-[note](#); Re 3:22-[note](#))

In Rev 4:1-[note](#), John begins with the time phrase **after these things**. What things? In context, the things Jesus has just said to the Churches in Revelation 2-3. And then in Re 13:9-[note](#) John records a statement very similar to that Jesus had stated to each church...

If anyone **has an ear, let him hear**.

Notice, that conspicuously missing from this phrase in Rev 13:9-[note](#) are the words **what the Spirit says to the churches**

In short, although, the phrase in Re 13:9-[note](#) is similar to the phrases in Revelation 2-3, there is no reference to the Church. The implication is that the Church is not present, having been removed from earth prior to the onset of the Tribulation.

**4). After Revelation 4, John presents two "new groups" inaugurated to accomplish God's work of ministry**

In Re 11:3ff-note we see God's two witnesses and in Re 7:4f-note we see 144,000 Jews sealed and protected. If the Church is present during the Tribulation, why is she not also mentioned as God's instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel? And if the Church is present, why isn't she sealed, especially in view of the fact that she is to be kept from the **hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole world** (Re 3:10-note)? The answers to these questions support the conclusion that the Church is not present on earth after Revelation 4 and that God provides other witnesses who can testify to the truth of the Gospel.

**5). The Lord's return would not surprise the Church if the rapture were either mid- or post-tribulation.**

Why? The answer becomes clear from review of Da 9:27-note for when the Antichrist brokers a covenant with Israel, believers could theoretically begin to mark off time and thus the day of the Lord's return could be known with certainty. But in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) Jesus Himself taught...

of that day and hour (of the return of Christ) no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. (Matthew 24:36,37)

Much of the rest of the Olivet discourse is an urgent exhortation to always be ready and watching for Christ's return, an exhortation that would be contradictory and unnecessary if we knew in advance the day of His coming. The **initial phase** of the coming of Christ to rapture His Bride, the Church, therefore, is always imminent (see note on **Imminency**). For those who come to faith in Christ in the Great Tribulation, they can know to some degree the time of the Lord's return.

**John Piper** (who I respect greatly) favors a post-tribulation rapture ([Definitions and Observations Concerning the Second Coming of Christ - Scroll down to "Arguments for Post-tribulationism"](#)) but in his comments on Luke 13:24ff he makes this comment regarding our need to strive to enter through the narrow door...

Jesus warned that the days just before **His Second Coming** would be in many ways **very normal**. It will be, Jesus says, like the days of Noah before the flood came and swept people away who were utterly unsuspecting

**Comment:** If one believes in a Post-Tribulation Rapture, it hardly seems possible that the days of the last half of the Tribulation would be "**very normal!**"

In addition if Jesus raptures all believers at the end of the Tribulation, who is left to populate the Millennial Kingdom? This would also seem to be a strong logical argument against a post-tribulation rapture.

<b>STEPS IN A JEWISH WEDDING**</b>		
<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scriptures</b>
<b>Marriage Covenant</b>	The father pays for the bride and establishes the marriage covenant.	Ac 20:28; 1Co 6:19,20;11:25 Ep 5:25, 26,27
<b>Bridal Chamber Prepared</b>	The son returns to his father's house and prepares the bridal chamber.	Jn 6:62; 14:2; Ac 1:9, 10, 11
<b>Bride Fetched</b>	At a time determined by the father (Mt 24:36), the groom fetches the bride to bring her to his father's house. "Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming. As a result, the groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, which forewarned the bride to be prepared for his coming.	Jn 14:3; 1Th 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
<b>Bride Cleansed</b>	The bride undergoes ritual cleansing prior to the wedding ceremony.	1Co 3:12, 13, 14, 15; Re 19:7, 8
<b>Wedding Ceremony</b>	The private wedding ceremony.	Re 19:7
<b>Consummation</b>	In the privacy of the bridal chamber the bride and groom consummate the marriage.	Re 19:7



<b>Marriage Feast</b>	The celebratory marriage feast to which many are invited.	Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Lk 12:36
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\*\*From **Tony Garland's** discussion of [Marriage of the Lamb](#) specifically [The Jewish Wedding Analogy](#)

**6) The Church has been looking for and expecting Jesus to return at any moment ever since His ascension** (see [Imminency](#)). This point is similar to point #1.

In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul writes that...

they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait (**present tense** = keep on waiting expectantly, waiting with a sense of anticipation as the habit of their life) for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who delivers us **from** (ek = out of - cp point #2 above) **the wrath** to come. (1Th 1:9-note; 1Th 1:10-note)

**Comment:** Although believers fully recognize the seriousness of God's wrath against sin, they rest in the glorious truth of the gospel that Christ delivers His own **from (ek)** or **out of** the coming wrath. Some expositors favor this deliverance as a reference to rescue from the eternal wrath of God in the Lake of fire. However, in the context of Paul's eschatological teaching that the Day of the Lord is associated with unbelievers who are in darkness (1Th 5:1, 2, 3 -note), it seems more likely that in 1Th 1:10-note **the specific wrath** (definite article is present) refers to the Tribulation which overlaps with the Day of the Lord. As Paul explained in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 God has not destined believers for **wrath**. The Tribulation is certainly a time of wrath, especially the last 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation (where the word **wrath** is heavily concentrated, 9/11 uses in Revelation occurring from chapter 11 onward which describes the last 3.5 years) And here in 1Th 1:10-note Paul emphasized that Jesus delivers believers from the **wrath** to come which would correlate with a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Now, admittedly, this same reasoning could be used to support the premise of a **Mid-Tribulation Rapture**, because this timing would also effect a rescue of believers from the Great Tribulation or last 3.5 years during which mankind will experience the primary outpouring of God's wrath. However, one of the greatest arguments against a **Mid-Tribulation Rapture** is that the time of the "initial phase" of Christ's return (as opposed to the "second phase" usually referred to as **The Second Coming** at the end of the Great Tribulation) to rapture the church could be calculated by using the date the Antichrist secured the covenant with Israel and adding 1260 days, 42 months or 3.5 years to that date (Seventieth Week of Daniel or notes Da 9:27-note). The upshot is that for the first 3.5 years believers would have no sense of Christ's **imminent** return such as Paul described!

The Thessalonians and Paul himself (as well as Silas and Timothy) fully expected to meet the Lord in the air as indicated by his use of the first person plural pronoun in the following verses...

For this **we** (Paul and the Thessalonian believers) say to you by the word of the Lord, that **we** (Paul and the Thessalonian believers) who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep... Then **we** (Paul and the Thessalonian believers) 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. (See 1Th 4:15-note; 1Th 4:17-note)

**Comment:** It is significant to note in these relatively early years of his ministry, Paul considered it likely that he, himself, would be living when Christ returned. This divinely inspired conviction proves that the rapture has always been imminent, not contingent on other events that must come first. That is why Jesus urged His disciples always to be watchful and ready for His return - Matthew 24:42,44.

**7) Another observation that indirectly favors a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the fact that the Church is repeatedly instructed to watch for Christ and never for the Antichrist.**

**8) Another "argument from silence" is the complete absence of any statement of rapture in the closing days of Daniel's Seventieth Week**

**9) Another line of indirect evidence favoring a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the Jewish focus of Daniel's Seventieth Week.**

In other words the tribulation, the Seventieth Week of Daniel, is primarily focused on Daniel's people, the Jews, (Da 9:24-note) and thus it is not surprising that there is no mention of the **Church** after **Revelation 2-3**. This notable absence of Christ's Bride, the Church from **Revelation 4-18**, is most logically explained by her Pre-Tribulation Rapture by her Bridegroom and the subsequent

renewal of Jehovah's redemptive program for His beloved "Wife", **Israel** (as He describes her in Je 31:32, Is 54:5, Ho 2:19). As an aside, some argue that although the term "**church**" is not present in Rev 4-18, the term "**saints**" is present and they are one in the same. Saints however is simply a generic term for believers of all ages {e.g., "**saints**" is a common term in Daniel for believers and has no specific reference to the entity of the "church" which is composed of saints} and does not prove the church is present in Rev 4-18.

**10) Where is the church mentioned in Revelation 6-19?** It is fascinating that John mentions 7 literal churches (granted they probably have symbolic meanings also) in Revelation 2-3 and then after describing the incredible scene in Heaven in Rev 4-5 makes absolutely not a "peep" about the Church in Revelation 6-19! Not one word about the Church in the Day of the LORD'S wrath! And to say that John's mention of "Israel" in Revelation 7:4 is a reference to the Church borders on the absurd to ridiculous, for even the immediate context lists **twelve tribes** all with names of tribes that composed the **nation of Israel** in the OT. Beloved, if this is not Israel and these are not tribes, then it follows one can make ANY passage in Scripture mean anything he wants it to mean! So again, the literal Church of Jesus Christ is not literally mentioned on earth in Revelation 6-19 which clearly describe the final outpouring of the wrath of God on the sinful, rebellious, God-hating world!

**11) Reasoning from Isaiah 65:17-25 - W A Criswell** (Baptist preacher of the past) makes a point I have never heard in support of a pre-tribulation (could also apply to mid-tribulation) rapture. Criswell is commenting on Isaiah 65:17-25, an interesting passage in its own right which appears to merge the New Heaven and New Earth with descriptions of the Millennial age and writes...

Isaiah 65:17-25 describe the Millennium. The suggestion that some may die during the Millennium argues for a pre-tribulation Rapture. If the Rapture were at the end of the Tribulation, all who entered the Millennium would have glorified bodies. (INTERESTING!!!)

**David Levy** explains the **Jewish focus of Daniel's 70th Week** writing that...

it is clear from Scripture that the **Church** and **Israel** are not identical. God has a separate program for each, especially during the Tribulation period. This is indicated in Daniel 9 (Da 9:24-note; Da 9:25-note; Da 9:26-note; Da 9:27-note), a key passage giving an overview of the Tribulation. The angel Gabriel informed Daniel about God's future program for **Israel** ("*for your people and your holy city*" Da 9:24-note). Gabriel said that God would deal with Israel for seventy weeks of seven years each, or four hundred ninety years. Those years are divided into three sections. The first seven weeks of years (49 years) deal with the return of the Jewish people from Babylon and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. The second section of sixty-two weeks (434 years) covers the rebuilding of Jerusalem until the Messiah is cut off (Jesus' crucifixion). Between the end of the sixty-nine weeks (483 years) and the beginning of the seventieth week is a **gap** of at least two thousand years (The so-called "Church Age", during which Christ builds His Body, the Church). ([The Rapture Question - The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc](#)) (Bolding added)

**Comment:** In other words what **Levy** is saying is that the Seventieth Week is primarily for the Jews, not for the Church, so the Church is taken out of the picture. For 2000 years God has placed Israel on the "back burner" while the Church Age has flourished. But when the Bridegroom returns to rapture His Bride, God renews His plan for Israel, culminating with the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

Gabriel explains to Daniel that the "last week" is primarily about Israel and the Jewish people declaring that...

Many (Jews) will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. (this group represents the remnant, the "all of Israel" who will be saved {Ro 11:26-note}, the 1/3 that are brought through the fires of the Great Tribulation {see Zech 12:10, 13:8, 9}, which will bring to an end the time of punishment for God's wife {see Je 31:32, Is 54:5, Ho 2:19}, Israel, who will finally be purified, so that all the Jews entering into the Millennium represent genuine believers in Messiah. Yes, Gentiles will be saved during the Seventieth Week of Daniel but the primary purpose of this refining fire is to purge the dross of unbelief from Israel.) (Daniel 12:10)

As alluded to above, some evidence favors a **Mid-Tribulation Rapture** occurring prior to the Great Tribulation in the last 3.5 years. One argument often given in support is that the Seventh Trumpet in Re 11:15 ([note](#)) is the same as the "last trumpet" Paul mentions in 1Co 15:52, but this is not supported by a careful analysis of parallel passages ([click for discussion](#))

**David Levy** summarizes the various views writing that...

Despite this proliferation of views, Christians need not be confused regarding the correct teaching of Scripture. The **Pretribulation Rapture** interpretation is the strongest position because it takes a **literal interpretation** (see Read the Bible Literally) of key Scriptures bearing on the Rapture of the church. Most advocates of a **Posttribulation Rapture** (see John MacArthur's comments on Post-Tribulation Rapture) do not interpret

Scripture literally but allegorically (see discussion of Interpretation), making the interpreter, not the Scripture, the final authority. Also, although some of the other positions claim to maintain that the Rapture of the church is imminent, only **pretribulationists** hold that Christ's imminent return is a signless event. And lastly, the **pretribulationist** view is the only view that consistently separates God's program for the church from His program for Israel. ([Ibid](#))

**Richard Mayhue** in his article in the Master's Seminary Journal's article [Why a Pretribulationist Rapture?](#) asks and answers the question...

#### **Will the "Rapture" Be Pre, Mid, or Post in a Time Relationship to Daniel's Seventieth Week?...**

The following seven evidences point to a pretribulationist rapture. In this writer's opinion, they create a far more compelling case than the reasoning given for any other time of the rapture...

- (1) The Church Is Not Mentioned in Revelation 6-18 as Being on Earth
- (2) The Rapture Is Rendered Inconsequential if It Is Posttribulationist
- (3) The Epistles Contain No Preparatory Warnings of an Impending Tribulation for Church-Age Believers
- (4) First Thes 4:13-18 Demands a Pretribulationist Rapture
- (5) John 14:1-3 Parallels 1 Thess 4:13-18
- (6) The Nature of Events at Christ's Posttribulationist Coming Differs from That of the Rapture
- (7) Rev 3:10 Promises That the Church Will Be Removed Prior to Daniel's Seventieth Week

**Related Resources on the Rapture** (see [preceding list of resources](#)):

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [Hoste parakaleite \(2PPAM\) allelous en tois logois toutois](#)

**Amplified:** So comfort and encourage each other with these words. (NLT - Tyndale House)

**Barclay:** So then encourage one another with these words. (Westminster Press)

**Phillips:** God has given me this message on the matter, so by all means use it to encourage one another. (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** So that-be encouraging one another with these words. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** so, then, comfort ye one another in these words.

#### **THEREFORE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER: Hoste parakaleite (PAM) allelous:**

- 1Th 5:11,14; Isaiah 40:1,2; Luke 21:28; Hebrews 12:12
- [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: What Happens to Christians Who Die Before Jesus Comes?-Pt 2](#)- John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Death and Christian Grief](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

1Th 5:11; 14+ Therefore **encourage** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) these commands) one another and **build up** ([present imperative](#)) one another, just as you also are doing....14 We urge you, brethren, **admonish** ([present imperative](#)) the unruly, **encourage** ([present imperative](#)) the fainthearted, **help** ([present imperative](#)) the weak, **be patient** ([present imperative](#)) with everyone.

Luke 21:28+ "But when these things begin to take place, **straighten up** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **lift up** ([aorist imperative](#)) your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

## THE TRUTH OF THE RAPTURE IS TO COMFORT NOT CONFUSE!

**Therefore (hoste)** or based upon what they have just been told, they are to comfort one another. Note carefully, Paul does not say this truth should inspire and stimulate great debates, heart feelings, scolding words of reproof or rebuke, etc... but comfort, continual comfort, commanded comfort... to one another because we are on the "same side"!

**Comfort (3870)** ([parakaleo](#) from **para** = side of + **kaléo** = call) conveys the basic idea of calling one alongside to help or give aid. It includes the idea of any kind of animating and cheering speech. In the present context some favor the translation of encourage and others favor comfort. As Hiebert observes...

The rendering **comfort** places the emphasis upon the consoling impact that it imparts to those who are sorrowing the loss of loved ones. **Encourage** suggests that there is solid ground for encouragement and confident hope in the face of the fact that loved ones have passed away. (Ibid)

The **present imperative** is a command to make this encouraging mindset your lifestyle (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). **Comfort** in this verse is virtually synonymous with the idea of strengthen. We have a blessed hope to share and it is surely reasonable that we **not grieve as the rest who have no hope** when our loved ones in the Lord die. Goodbyes are the law of earth. Reunions are the law of heaven.

Note that Paul does not himself seek to comfort or encourage his readers but rather bids them actively to comfort or encourage **one another**.

**One another (240)**([allelon](#) from **állos** = another) means just what it says. It is like the sequoia trees of California which tower as high as 300 feet above the ground. You might be surprised to discover that these giant trees have unusually shallow root systems that reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Their intertwining roots also provide support for each other against the storms. That's why they usually grow in clusters. Seldom will you see a redwood standing alone, because high winds would quickly uproot it! That's what "one another" means!

### WITH THESE WORDS: en tois logois toutois:

- Hebrews 10:24, 25
- [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: What Happens to Christians Who Die Before Jesus Comes?-Pt 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Death and Christian Grief](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WORDS OF COMFORT

What comforts? **"with these words"** or literally "in these words". The word of God gives comfort. Hiebert explains that...

The comfort to be experienced lies in the very words the writers have given them. These very words contain not only the antidote to their sorrow, but proclaim a message of encouragement and hope. There is solid comfort in these words for believers when they stand beside the grave of loved ones. Their rich comfort stands in striking contrast to the insufficiency of the comfort that the pagan world had to offer in such an hour. The helplessness of the pagan world in the face of death is well illustrated by a second-century papyrus that Deissmann quotes

"Irene to Taonnophris and Philo, good comfort. I was sorry and wept over the departed one as I wept over Didymas. And all things, whatsoever were fitting, I did, and all mine, Epaphroditus and Thermuthion and Philion and Appollonius and Plantas. But nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort ye one another. Fare ye well.

The blessed prospect of the rapture as described in 1Thessalonians 4:13-18 may rightly be called the polestar of the Christian church. It constitutes a precious revelation that has brought comfort and cheer to believers down through the centuries. (Ibid)

**Words (3056)**([logos](#) from **lego** = to speak intelligently source of English "logic, logical") means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **lógos** is most often translated **"word"** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance".

**A B Simpson** writes...

THE LORD'S COMING IS A SOURCE OF COMFORT TO THE AFFLICTED AND BEREAVED - "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This entire passage (1Th 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) contains the most comforting and tender picture of the Lord's coming in the Scriptures. Even the briefest enumeration of the point is full of instruction and consolation.

1. We are here most plainly reminded that those who sleep in Jesus are living still, for it is said: "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." If God is to bring them with Him they must be somewhere. They cannot be mere dust and ashes in the grave, for He is to bring them to the earth. They must be real persons, or how can He bring them? And they must be with Him now in their disembodied state in order that He may bring them to meet their resurrected bodies.

2. Next, there is a beautiful provision for the reunion of long parted friends. The dead in Christ are first raised, and then the living believers changed. But there is a little time before the meeting with the Lord for mutual recognition and fellowship. They are caught up together and on the way what happy greetings, what mutual explanations, what tales there will be to tell of the years that rolled between, and the blended experiences of earth and heaven? Then when all tears are wiped away, and all longing satisfied, will come -

3. The meeting with the Lord in the air, and all lesser love will for a time be lost sight of in the rapture of His presence and the welcome from His voice. (**A B Simpson**. Christ in the Bible - Thessalonians)