



“The Next Event on God’s Prophetic Calendar”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Thessalonica to clarify the timeline of events that begin with the removal of the believers from the earth, the revealing of the Antichrist, the seven years of tribulation, and the return of Jesus Christ to this earth as the King of Kings and Lord of Lord.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “If we believe Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”
- To accept Jesus Christ as our Savior is not only to believe He died and rose again to pay the penalty for our sins, it is also to believe He is coming again:
 - First, FOR His followers, to remove us from the wrath of the Great Tribulation.
 - Then, WITH His ransomed and redeemed, to rule and reign with Him on this earth for 1,000 years, and in the new heaven and new earth forever, world without end.
- The rapture of the Church, as Paul described it in 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, as well as in 1 Corinthians 15, is the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to His disciples in John 14.
- The rapture of the Church is one of the essential truths of the Christian Faith. Therefore, to doubt it is to question the very words of our Lord.

1. The Lord’s Compassionate Promises – John 14:1-3 – “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house are many

mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Notice the parallels of our Lord’s words and the words of the Apostle Paul.

- Jesus said, “If you believe in God, believe also in Me.”
- Paul said, “If we believe Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

Jesus made three promises to His disciples:

- He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them.
 - Theologically, the Holy Spirit is the same as the Spirit of Christ. (Colossians 1:27)
 - To have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us is the same as if we were dwelling in the presence of Christ.
- He was going back to the Father’s House to prepare a place for them.
 - Theologically, Jesus was equating Himself with God the Father.
 - Rather than “mansions,” the Greek word “monai” means “abodes, dwelling places, or many rooms.”
- He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was, they would be also.
 - He would “receive” them.
 - They would “go” to be with Him.
 - Jesus was not referring to His return to earth, but to their transport to heaven.

Forty-days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven, and for the last 2000 years, He has been preparing our room in the Father’s house. Soon, He will step out on the porch of heaven and call His Bride to “come forth,” (Revelation 4:1) and as the Apostle Paul said, in the “twinkling of an eye” those who are dressed and ready will be transported into glory to live with the Lord forever!

Maranatha!

2. The Apostles’ Clarifying Prophecy – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

The English word “rapture” is taken from the Latin term, “rapio,” which was used to translate the Greek verb “harpazo,” which describes a violent act such as to “caught up,” or to be “snatched away.”

- The rapture of the Church is taught in John 14, 1 Corinthians 1, 1 Corinthians 15, Philippians 3, and Titus 2, but it is fully explained in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

- In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul assured his converts they were not living in the “Day of the Lord,” for, in chapter 4, as Jesus assured His disciples, God said He would spare them from His wrath.
- The Thessalonian believers knew about the return of Christ; they even expected it to happen in their lifetime.
 - Chapter 1:3 – Paul commended them for their work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in the Lord.
 - Chapter 1:9 – Paul commended them for turning away from their idols and unto the true God, and for their willingness to wait for His Son from heaven.
 - Chapter 2:19 – Paul referred to them as his joy and his crown.
 - Chapter 3:11 – Paul chastised those who had taken that truth to the extreme, quit their jobs, abandoned their families, and were just waiting for the Lord to return.
 - Chapter 3:13 – Paul reminded them he had “Established their hearts without blame in holiness before God the Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with His holy ones.” Then he challenged them to increase their love for one another, because love for others produces holiness, and when Jesus comes for us, we want to be found holy and blameless before God.
 - 1 John 3:3 – “He who lives in the hope of our Lord’s return purifies himself, just as Christ is pure.”

Some of the Thessalonian believers were suffering such severe persecution, they thought the day of the Lord had come.

- Someone had written a fake letter, which they attributed to the Apostle Paul, saying they were, in fact, living in the day of the Lord; that they had missed the rapture.
- However, even though their assumptions were wrong, they were still correct in their chronology of eschatology.
 - Had Paul taught them that Christians would endure any part of the Tribulation, they would not have been surprised by the persecution they were enduring.
 - They were expecting Christ, not the Antichrist.
 - They were expecting to live in peace in the Father’s house, not enduring the wrath of God upon the earth.
 - The basis for their grief and sorrow was, if what they were going through was the Day of the Lord, what about those saints who had died before.

3. The Pastor’s Comforting Passion – 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow now, even as others, which have no hope.”

The Foundation for the Rapture – Vs. 14-15a – “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus, for this we say by the word of the Lord.”

- The central truth of the doctrine of salvation is summed up in the term, “Our Union with Christ.”
- What literally happened to Jesus 2000 years ago, figuratively happens to each believer when they receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

- While some of the benefits of our salvation are immediate, others are given progressively, and all will be given completely when we are united with Christ eternally.
- Those we are still sinners by nature and by choice, because we are in Christ, we have been forgiven of our sins, and we have been set free from our slavery to sin, but as the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:12, we have not yet been delivered from the presence of sin, and won't be until we are removed from this world by the rapture, or our resurrection. (Romans 6:3ff)

The Clarification of the Rapture – Vs. 15b – “That we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.”

- By saying “we who are alive,” even Paul thought he would be living to see the rapture of the Church, and the 2nd coming of the Lord.
- However, in 2 Timothy 4:6, Paul had resigned himself to the fact that he was ready to die and to leave this world behind.
- In Philippians 1:20ff, Paul said, whether he was alive or dead, Christ would be exalted in his body. Why?
- Those Christians who are alive when Jesus calls His Bride to “come forth,” will not be transported to heaven any sooner than those who have died.
- In fact, those who have died will be resurrected first, and then united with those who are alive at that time, and both groups will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:51ff, the Apostle Paul described in detail the spectacular events of that day: “Behold, I tell you a mystery:
 - We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
 - In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.
 - For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
 - For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
 - So, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”
 - 58 – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”
 - 1 John 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Amen!

The Illumination of the Rapture – Vs. 16-17 –

- “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven” – fulfilling the promise He made to His disciples in John 14.
- “With a shout” – the Greek word used here is “keleusma,” which was a command given by a leader to those troops under his charge.
- “With the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.” The word “archangel” only occurs twice in the Bible. The first reference is in this text, and the other is in Jude 1:9 where the

archangel was identified as Michael, the “Chief Angel” whose sole purpose was to carry out the will of God.

- “And the dead in Christ shall rise first.” – they are the only ones who will be resurrected at this time. The Old Testament Saints and those who died during the time of the Tribulation will be resurrected when Jesus returns to the earth, and the resurrection of the unjust and the ungodly of all ages will occur at the end of the Millennial reign with Christ.
- “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 the term “caught up” means to be “snatched away. Both the dead and the living will be snatched up together, their bodies transformed into spiritual bodies like that of the resurrected Christ, and taken up to glory.
- “To meet the Lord in the air.” – fulfilling the promise He made to His disciples to receive them unto Himself.
- “And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.” – Yes, we will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give account of the days of our lives, attend the Marriage Supper, and 7-years later, we will return to this earth to reign with Christ for 1,000 years, and then in the new heaven and new earth forever.
- “Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” – Such words should bring us comfort, for whether we are alive or dead on the day of the rapture, we will be with the Lord forever.

“The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers.

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”

1 Peter 4:7-8