

“The Rapture Of The Church”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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Teaching Aim: To explore misunderstandings in the Thessalonian church about the death of a believer and see how Paul’s teaching on this subject relates to us today. To realize, when a believer dies, his or her soul goes immediately to be with the Lord, while the body goes to the grave to await the great day of resurrection. To examine the future rapture of the Church and understand why this event should be an encouragement to every true believer.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Believers should not be ignorant about what happens after death (1 Thess. 4:13-14)

1. What is the meaning of the word, “*ignorant?*” (See Dictionary) On what topic do we find Paul addressing the Thessalonian church in **verse 1**? Why did Paul want to correct their ignorance (or not knowing) (**vs. 1**)? Have you ever attended the funeral of an unbeliever? What was it like? Why was there so much grief?

2. Sleep is commonly used in the Bible as a metaphor for death. How did Jesus use this metaphor in **Matt. 9:23-24** to portray the resurrection of the dead? What makes sleep such a great illustration of the death and resurrection of a born-again Christian?

3. How did Paul use the metaphor of sleep in **1 Cor. 11:29-30**? Why is it important for believers to examine themselves spiritually (are we right with God; are we right with others) before participating in communion today? Do you take time to examine yourself?

4. Will only believers be resurrected from the dead in the future or will unbelievers as well? (See **Dan. 12:1-2**) To what will believers be resurrected? (See **John 3:16, 36; 1 John 5:11-13; 2 Cor. 5:10**) To what will unbelievers be resurrected? (See **Rev. 20:11-15**)

5. Some in Christian circles teach the doctrine of soul sleep; at death the body goes to the grave and the soul goes to sleep (unconscious) until the great Resurrection Day. Is this true? Many believe **Luke 16:19-31** is a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. If **Luke 16:19-31** is a parable, it is the only parable in which names are used. What can we learn about the topic of soul sleep from **Luke 16:19-31**? How conscious was the rich man of his suffering? How has **Luke 16:31** been fulfilled?

6. Sleep is used to describe the dead body not the soul. (See **2 Cor. 5:1-8**) What can we learn about the death of a Christian from these verses? (Also see **2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:23-24**)

7. What is the Christian's hope according to **verse 14**? Why should the resurrection of Christ encourage every believer? Why must every Christian either die or be raptured in order to go to heaven? (See **1 Cor. 15:50-52**) According to **1 Cor. 15:52**, how quickly will the rapture take place? Why should the future rapture of the Church be an encouragement to every believer? (See **1 Cor. 15:53-58**) Are you looking forward to the return of Christ?

Part II: At the rapture the dead in Christ will be raised first (1 Thess. 4:15-16)

1. What major concern did the Thessalonian believers have about the coming of the Lord (**vs. 15**)? Why do you think they were concerned about this? It appears in **verse 15** that Paul had a direct revelation from the Lord on this topic. What was that revelation? Why was this revelation important to the Thessalonian believers?

2. Jesus spoke about the future rapture of the Church in **John 14:1-3**. Where is "*His Father's house*" that Jesus spoke about? What promise did Jesus make to His disciples? Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? If so, what are some ways that being a disciple of Jesus Christ has changed your life?

3. In light of **verse 15b**, did Paul expect the rapture of the Church to take place during his lifetime or thousands of years later? Why is it important for Christians to live their lives as if Christ was returning today but also as if His return were many years away?

4. Paul's point was for believers to not be overly concerned about their Christian loved ones who had passed away; God had a plan for them. At the rapture their dead bodies will be raised to new life, even before those living at the time of Christ's coming. Why is this such an important message for believers of all time?

5. What can we learn about the coming of Christ from **verse 16a**? Who will shout and announce the arrival of the Lord to receive His Bride (the Church)? What is the name of the only archangel mentioned by name in the Bible? (See **Jude 8-9**)

6. Who do the Jehovah's Witnesses believe Michael the archangel really is? (Hint: Google it) How can we easily refute the Jehovah's Witness view from **Hebrews 1:1-14**?

7. What can we learn about the ranks of angels from **Col. 1:15-17**? Today most images of angels found in pictures and on Christmas decorations are that of female angels. How many female angels are there in the Bible? Why do you think culture is so caught up with woman angels? Why are angels portrayed as having wings? Which angels have wings? (See **Isa. 6:1-3; Ezek. 1:1-9; Rev. 4:1-9**)

8. Why do many Bible scholars believe there is more than one archangel? (See **Dan. 10:13**) Some believe that Gabriel is also an archangel. Is he? (See **Luke 1:19, 26**) What four archangels are named in the Jewish literary work, "*The Book Of Enoch*?" (Hint: Google it) Does this book have the same authority as Sacred Scripture? Why or why not?

9. What can we learn from **Ezek. 28:15-15, 17** and **Isa. 14:12-15** about the fallen angel Satan? The Mormons teach that Lucifer is the spirit brother of Jesus. Is he? Many people believe that Jesus and Lucifer are equal and opposite. Are they? (See **John 1:1-3**) How much greater is Jesus than Satan? Is Satan omniscient? Omnipresent? Omnipotent?

**Part III: The future rapture of the Church should be a comfort to every true believer
(1 Thess. 4:17-18)**

1. What will happen immediately following the resurrection of dead believers (**vs. 17**)? Is there any significance to believers being caught up into the clouds? (See **Exod. 13:21-22; 16:10; Luke 21:27-28; Rev. 14:14**)
2. The word “*rapture*” comes from the Latin Vulgate meaning “*caught up*” (“*rapturo*”). The Greek word (“*harpazo*”) means “*to snatch,*” or “*to seize;*” it denotes a sudden a violent taking away! What happens as a result of this sudden taking away? Do you look forward to this day? Why or why not?
3. When the believer in Christ dies, the body goes to the grave and the soul (or spirit) goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. (See **2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23**) What will happen at the moment of the rapture? (See **Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3**) Should this alarm or comfort Christian believers (**vs. 18**)? Why?
4. There is much debate about when the rapture of the Church will take place. There are many different views in Christianity, among them are: pre-trib; mid-trib; post-trib; still others believe the rapture will occur at the end of time when Christ returns for judgment. What position do you believe is the correct one? Why? What does Jesus teach about the timing of this event? (See **Mark 13:32-33**)
5. Eschatology is not something to divide the body of Christ over; it will all pan out in the end. What should the main focus of the Church be today? Are you looking forward to the return of Christ? (See **Rev. 22:20**) Do you live out this excitement in your everyday life?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- There is a world of difference between how believers and unbelievers react to death.
- Unbelievers grieve as those who have no hope; death is horrible in the minds of many.
- The future resurrection of Christians is as certain as the death and resurrection of Christ.
- Sleep is an appropriate metaphor for death; we dramatically portray our future resurrection of the dead every night and every morning.
- When the rapture occurs, the dead in Christ will rise first.
- After the dead in Christ have risen, believers who are alive will be caught up into the clouds.
- Raptured believers will receive their glorified bodies and be with the Lord forever.
- The future rapture of the Church should be an encouragement to every true believer.