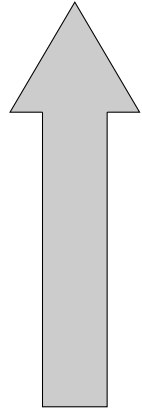


The Rapture of the Church

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18



Intro

It is interesting how there are many prophecies in the Bible about Christ's first coming.

- He would be born of a virgin
- He would be born in Bethlehem
- He would be called a Nazarene
- He would come to save His people from their sins
- He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver
- He would be crucified

And while Jesus was here on earth He prophesied what would happen to Him. He told His disciples on a number of occasions that He would be betrayed and handed over to the authorities and be crucified, and most amazingly – rise again on the third day. And that is precisely what happened!

All the many prophecies of Christ's first coming came true.

Before Jesus left He told the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

And He sent the Holy Spirit.

And before He was arrested to be crucified, Jesus told His disciples that he would be betrayed but He also gave them these amazing words in the John 14:3.

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. [2] "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. [3] "And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**

With those words, He told His disciples that He would come again and receive them unto Himself. With those words Jesus predicted His second coming.

After Jesus' resurrection, do you remember what happened right after He ascended into heaven? All the disciples were looking up into the clouds that Jesus had just disappeared into. I'm sure their jaws were hanging open. It may have been the first time someone uttered the words, "WOW!"

Acts 1:9-11

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. [10] And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; [11] and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, **will come** in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

It is impossible to speak about eschatology "the study of the End Times" without speaking about the subject of the Rapture.

1 Thes. 4:13-18

[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. [15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. [17] 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. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Motive for sharing about the 2nd Coming

[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. . [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul did not want the Thessalonians to be uninformed.

He did not want the Thessalonians to grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

Paul's words are similar to John's words.

It is similar to John 14:1-3

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. [2] "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were

*not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
[3] "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

God wants us informed. He does not want us to grieve. Instead He wants to give us hope. Jesus did not tell us when He was coming back, but instead that He was coming back. That is enough to give us hope.

The Plausibility of the Rapture

[14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

Some people think the idea of a rapture is too fantastic. I talked to one person who said they started reading the "Left Behind" series and said they stopped when they realized that people had disappeared off of airplanes and the like. It all seemed to ridiculous to them.

There are a lot of things that have seemed ridiculous to people through the years.

- if you were to try to tell someone three hundred years ago that people would be sending messages and pictures to one another through empty space they would probably have laughed.
- the movie – A Far Off Place – the native boy laughed when he was told about satellites and television.

The Sequence of the Rapture

[15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself

will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...

God will descend

- with a shout
- with the voice of the archangel
- with the trumpet of God

The dead in Christ shall rise first –

Then those who are alive and remain until His coming will be caught up

The Nature of the Rapture

[17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...

It is being “caught up” which means to be snatched away.

It is a spiritual as well as a physical event. Our bodies will be changed.

1 Cor. 15:51-58

[51] Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. [53] For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then

will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. [55] "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

- it is going to happen in a moment of time, in the twinkling of an eye
- the dead will be raised imperishable
- and we who are alive will be changed (we will be given an imperishable body
- death will be swallowed up in victory

The Rendezvous Location

[17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...

This is one reason I believe the Second Coming of Christ is in two stages,

- the rapture of the church
- the revelation

Barry McGuire wrote a song called, "Clouds". The words go like this.

Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off of those clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long
Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off them clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long.

I wake in the morning and I'm waiting
Creation seems to be anticipating.
And I'd love to the one to introduce you to God's Son
Cuz you may be why He has been hesitating

Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off them clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long.

Talk about your rock stars coming to town
You know you're blind to all the times they've let you down
Yes a wind and an angel shouts you'll know what I'm talking about
And won't you feel sad if you're still hanging round

Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off them clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long. Talkin about clouds...

He'll change us in the twinkling of an eye
We won't even have the time to say goodbye, so goodbye
But you can come with us now, if you give your life to Jesus now
And you suddenly take an interest in the sky.

Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off them clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long.
Clouds, I can't keep my eyes off them clouds in the sky
Cuz I know it won't be long, it won't be long.
No, no it won't be long, it won't be long...

The Finality of the Rapture

[17] 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.

Our God is a relational God. He wants us to be with Him. We have made the choice to honor Him with our lives here, so He chooses to honor us with Him there.

[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. [15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. [17] 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. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.