



## 1ST THESSALONIANS 4 PART II

*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.*

*1 Th 4:17-18.*

Many use 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 to support the doctrine of the rapture of the Church but it is important to note that the context of this passage was to answer the question, what happens to the believer that dies before Christ comes back? Paul answers the question with Hope. He writes, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus." (1 Th 4:13-14.) The pagan world these Thessalonian believers lived in had no hope in any life after death. It is instinctual of mankind to know that this life does not end after the body dies. Whether through philosophy or the doctrines of demons, nearly every culture has tried to answer this question. But only the Gospel, the authoritative word of God has answered it in truth with HOPE. Ecclesiastes 12:7 reminds us that the body will return to dust, but the spirit will return to the creator who gave it. We have a hope that Those who have put their trust in God and recognized Jesus as Lord will be with Him for all eternity. Yet a stark warning is found in scripture for those who reject Him. As the church is resurrected to be with God in Glory, The unrighteous will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

There are many theories as to when this resurrection will take place. It has become one of the most divisive conversations in the church to this day. Many argue pre-tribulation, many argue post-tribulation, some argue mid. We believe that only God knows the time, further, the timing of the rapture is a non-essential issue. As scripture says regarding secondary issues "... Each must be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom 14:5) and "avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless." (Titus 3:9) While there are numerous ways to look at the rapture. It is important to first realize the context of this passage is to give us hope in the coming of Christ, that we will always be with the Lord. It gives us confidence that whether by death or rapture, we can take great comfort in knowing that we will be with God, forever no matter when God has chosen to rapture his Church.

***The rapture and resurrection give the believer a true hope in life after death.***

### Discussion Questions

1. What Old Testament passages confirm the rapture or resurrection of the Church?
2. What New Testament Passages confirm the rapture or resurrection of the Church?
3. How does 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 provide you hope about life after death or the death of a loved one?
4. How is the hope we have different than that of the world? How do we share this hope with the world?
5. Many believers hold tightly to their convictions of their eschatology. How do we gracefully handle an opinion that is different than ours? How do we keep it from damaging the Church?