



Go for God!

## **“Let’s Be a Rapture Ready Fellowship!”**

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18**

#### **> What is the RAPTURE?**

The word “RAPTURE” is not found in the Bible; however, the Latin translation gives us the word “*rapturo*” for the Greek word “*harpazo*” which is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 - *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.* The “*rapturo / harpazo*”, that is “*caught up*” or “*snatching away*” of the church is the event in which God removes all born again believers, that is the “*bride of Christ*” from the earth in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the tribulation period against a godless and Christ rejecting world; thus fulfilling the *70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel* for the nation and people of Israel (Daniel 9:24-27); also known as “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jer. 30:7). The rapture is described primarily in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54; along with supplemental passages in John 14:1-3; Matthew chapters 24 and 25; as well as Revelation 3:7-13. Elsewhere it is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39) and to describe Paul’s experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Thus there can be no doubt that the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to indicate the actual removal of people from earth to heaven.

(v13-14) We are not “*ignorant*,” we have “*hope*,” an assurance that those who have previously died as believers are presently with Jesus in heaven; we have further commentary by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 - *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

- Also, Philippians 1:21, 23 – *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*

- And 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 - *It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

(v15-18) In verse 17 believers are “*caught up*” the Greek word is *harpazo*, which means “*to catch up or grasp hastily, to snatch up, to lift, to transport, or to*

*rapture.*” In the Latin Vulgate we have the word “*rapturo*,” thus the term in English “*rapture.*” In regard to the *trumpet of God* (also found in 1 Cor. 15:52) this trumpet must not be confused with judgment trumpets of Rev. 8–11, for if the church had to go through the judgments of the Great Tribulation of that section of Revelation it surely would not be comforting. However, we find a preview of the trumpet of God in Ex. 19:16–19, which called the people out of the camp to meet God. It will be a trumpet of deliverance (cf. Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 9:14). In verse 18 we are called to “comfort one another with these words.” As with all Christians, Paul believed the event was near (cf. Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 10:11; 16:22; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13).

- Let’s turn to 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and observe four aspects of the rapture (v51-54):

- (1) *We shall not all sleep* (die);
- (2) *We shall be changed* (to make different);
- (3) *In a moment* (Gk. - *atomoo* – an atom of time);
- (4) *This corruption* (decayed, perishable) *puts on incorruption* (unending existence, genuineness), *this mortal puts on immortality* (deathlessness). This all happens in *the twinkling of an eye*, faster than a wink! Are you listening for *the trumpet of God*?

> *When will the RAPTURE happen?*

- The RAPTURE will happen when the gospel has gone out to the whole world (Matthew 24:14).

- The RAPTURE will happen when Israel has become a nation once again (Matthew 24:32-35).

- The RAPTURE will happen when there’s a revived Roman Empire; today we have the European Union, which is the revived Roman Empire (Daniel Ch. 7 & 9).

- The RAPTURE will happen at the conclusion of the church age (Rev. Ch. 2 & 3); the last days church will become *lukewarm* (Rev. 4:14-22) and *apostate* (to fall away from the faith, which is the Word of God) (2Thessalonians Ch. 2).

- The RAPTURE will happen when the world is full of sin and corruption like the “*days of Noah*” (Matthew 24:36-39)

- After the RAPTURE then comes the “*Great Tribulation*” (Matthew 24:15-28), also known as the “*day of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jer. 30:7) (Jacob represents Israel). Daniel 12:1 reads “*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.*”

- Chuck Smith writes, “Why is this Great Tribulation coming? The Scripture says that its purpose is threefold: (1) *to try men who dwell upon the earth* (Rev.

3:10); (2) *that God might vent His wrath upon the wicked* (Rev. 15:7); (3) *to destroy those who destroyed the earth* (Rev. 11:18). Those who fall in one or all of these categories will be on the earth to experience the Tribulation period.”

- Understanding the doctrine of the *Imminent Return of Christ* - means “at any moment coming!” The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:14; Jas. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:3-4). Such passages as 1 Thess. 5:6; Titus 2:13; Rev. 3:3 all warn the believer to be watching for the Lord Himself. (The Pre-tribulation view of the rapture creates a “moment by moment expectation” for the Lord’s coming for the true church.)<sup>1</sup>

- Jesus affirms His doctrine “imminent return” in Matthew 24:36-25:13 - *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”*

- The word “taken” in verses 40-41 is *para lambanomi*, this Greek word is also found in Mt. 1:24 when Joseph *takes* Mary as his bride; and in Mt. 17:1 when Jesus *took* Peter, James and John to the Mt. of Transfiguration and was glorified; also John 14:3 – *“I will come again and take you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.”* Notice, a bride is taken like the church to Christ; up to glory (the Mt.), the bride glorified in heaven; and we are forever with the Lord.

- Look at the doctrine of the imminent return” in the following verses - *But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

*“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day*

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.156-218

*when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

**Matthew Chapter 25 - The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins**

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

- **Pre-tribulation Rapture** (Calvary Chapel teaches this view): Christ will come for his saints before the tribulation (Revelation chapters 6 – 19); afterward, He will come with his saints, which is the second coming of Christ (Revelation 19). The first stage of Christ's coming is called the *rapture*; the second is called the *revelation*.

- **Partial Rapture**: This position states that only believers who are watching and waiting for the Lord will be raptured at various times before and during the seven-year Tribulation. Those who are raptured are spiritually mature saints, both dead and living (1Thess. 4:13-18).

- **Mid-tribulation Rapture**: This position sees that the church, believers in Christ, are raptured in the middle of the tribulation.

- **Pre-wrath Tribulation Rapture**: The pre-wrath rapture theory says that the rapture occurs before the "*great day of . . . wrath*" (Revelation 6:17). According to this view, believers go through the first part of the tribulation but not the "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21). The church will endure Satan's fury and man's persecution but will be spared God's wrath. Before God pours out His judgment on the world, the church will be caught up to heaven. The pre-wrath rapture theory views the trumpet and the bowl judgments (Revelation 7–16) as the wrath of God, from which the church is exempted (1 Thessalonians 5:9). However, the first six seal judgments (Revelation 6) are not considered the wrath of God; rather, they are viewed as "the wrath of Satan" or "the wrath of the antichrist." This is because there is

no direct mention of God's wrath until after the sixth seal is broken (Revelation 6:17). According to the pre-wrath rapture theory, the church will be present to experience the first six seals. One of many flaws in the pre-wrath rapture theory is its teaching that the first seal judgments are not the wrath of God. Scripture shows that it is the Lamb who opens the seals (Revelation 5:5; 6:1). No other man is found worthy to open them (5:3-4). It would seem, then, these are not man's judgments, but God's. The tribulation begins when Jesus opens the first seal, and from that point on, the wrath of God is meted out on a sinful world.

- Post-tribulation Rapture: This position asserts that the living believers are to be raptured at the second coming of Christ, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. This viewpoint denies the imminent return doctrine, for we are told that Christ will return to 1260 days from the "abomination of desolation", no surprise, just count the days (Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

- Pan-tribulation – In hopes that everything will just pan-out.

> The RAPTURE, are you ready?

- Embrace the PROMISE of JESUS in – John 14:1-3 - *"Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

- The PRECEDENCE – God removes his righteous before His judgment! - *Enoch Genesis 5:24 - And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

*Hebrews 11:5-6 - By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

*Noah - Genesis Ch. 6 – 9; Hebrews 11:7 - By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.);*

- *Lot - Genesis Ch. 19; Luke 17:28-30 - Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

- What should we do at this time? Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16 - "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20 - Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

- REJOICE IN THE RAPTURE! Phil 3:20-21 - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.