

The Resurrection and Rapture of All Christians

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Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Lord's Coming

Central Idea of Message: Jesus is coming again to gather his believers together and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

Introduction: I can find no place in the Bible that tells me when Jesus is returning. Even a very close look at this passage results in discovering no chronology regarding Jesus' return.

Further, while highly competent Bible scholars disagree on the subject, no proficient Bible scholar denies the fact that Jesus Christ is coming to earth again.

The reality of his first coming as the baby in the manger assures the fact of his second coming as the conquering King of the universe. We better be ready!

Here is what the inspired Apostle Paul had to say about the resurrection and rapture of all Christians.

I. God Wants Believers to Know There Is Life After Death (vv. 13-14)

- A. God does not want believers uninformed about those who are asleep (v. 13)
 - 1. Asleep
 - a) Euphemism for death
 - b) Greek word here is where we get our word for cemetery, which means "sleeping place"
 - c) "To sleep" expresses continuance of life
 - d) Does *not* imply unconscious existence until the resurrection
 - e) Reference to believers
 - f) **Death does not terminate the relationship of believers with Christ (cf. Tolbert 80)**
 - 2. God does not want believers grieving hopelessly about the fate of those who have died in Christ
 - a) Death brings sorrow to all affected by it
 - b) **Death should not bring the grief of despair to the Christian**

3. Those who have heard gospel revelation and have died outside of Christ have no hope
 - a) This explodes the myth of Universalism
 - b) This explodes the myth of Purgatory
 - c) This explodes the myth of Annihilationism
 - d) **Death is a grim reality which is full of despair outside of a faith relationship with the God of heaven and earth**
- B. God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (v. 14)
 1. Belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ saves
 2. Belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ insures resurrection in glory
 3. **Belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ promises, for Christians who have died, a return trip to earth with Jesus when he comes back**
 - a) The only way to return to earth with Jesus is to be with him already
 - b) Christians are with Jesus immediately following death
 - c) What this intermediate state is like we do not know, but it will not be a disembodied existence
 - (1) Similar to the resurrected body of Jesus
 - (2) Not limited to time, space, or density
 - (3) Temporary until the glorious resurrection body is given
 4. Resurrecting believers is no problem for the one who raised Jesus!
 5. God is here equated with Jesus
 6. Are you in Jesus?

II. **God Wants Believers to Know There Is a Second Coming of Christ (vv. 15-18)**

- A. Those who are alive will not precede those who have died in Christ (v. 15)
 1. Paul and other biblical writers spoke the word of the Lord concerning this matter
 - a) Reference to parallel passages?
 - b) Reference to an unrecorded saying of Jesus?
 - c) Reference to a special revelation?
 2. Paul's "we" suggests he expected to be alive when the Lord returned

3. **All Christians need to live life as if Jesus could return today or death could occur today**
 4. **Those who are alive and remain until the second coming of Christ will not rise from the earth to meet the returning Lord in the air before those who have fallen asleep**
 5. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ rise first
 - a) The dead in Christ are given resurrection priority
 - b) The dead believers will not miss out on this monumental, historical event!
 - c) What a sight to behold!
- B. The dead in Christ shall rise first (v. 16)
1. The Lord Jesus himself will descend from heaven with a shout (see Matt. 24:30-31 and John 14:3)
 - a) What will he shout?
 - (1) "Hey you"?
 - (2) Call of command?
 - (3) Some associate the shout with the summons to believers (cf. Baxter 220)
 - b) With the voice of the archangel
 - (1) Michael is the only archangel named in the New Testament (Jude 9)
 - (2) Some associate the voice of the archangel with the summons to Israel (cf. Baxter 220)
 - c) With the trumpet of God: some associate the trumpet blare with judgment of the nations (Rev. 8:1-13)
 - d) This is not a secret return but a very public return
 2. **The dead in Christ rise first: this is the resurrection which issues a new heavenly body to each believer**
- C. Those who are still alive rise next (v. 17)
1. Those who are alive at the return of Christ rise to meet the Lord and the others in the air
 2. High flying with no fear of heights!
 3. Changed in a moment to a new indestructible body (1 Cor. 15:51-52)!
 4. From this point forward all of these people will be with the Lord forever!
 - a) Raptured before the tribulation and taken to heaven to await the end of the seven years?
 - b) Raptured into the sky to meet together and descend as one body to establish the

millennial kingdom of Christ toward the end of the tribulation? *

- D. Believers are told to comfort one another with these words (v. 18)
1. It brings great comfort to know an eternal reunion is coming!
 2. It is comforting to know there is eternal life after death
 3. It is comforting to know that separation from Jesus Christ is impossible
 4. Neither death nor life can separate a believer from Christ or a believer from a believer
 5. **What comfort is there for the unbeliever?**
 - a) None!
 - b) **For the unbeliever, death brings Hell, and Hell brings the end of friendships, family relationships, and, most of all, the end of the possibility of relationship with God himself**

**Conclusion: "With the archangel's cry, And a loud trumpet-blast,
With a shout from the sky, He is coming at last!" Are you ready
for his return?**