

December 31

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NIV) ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

One of my favorite movies is Apollo 13. I grew up reading science fiction books. I remember the Russians putting up the first satellite. I watched Armstrong take the first steps on the moon. Apollo 13 was supposed to add to those amazing events, but things were horribly wrong. The movie depicts the efforts of many to bring a crippled ship home. Men and women worked math, science, electronics, oxygen levels, etc. to figure out a way to bring those three men home safely, and they did. I could not understand how they could do those calculations on earth to bring a constantly moving ship to a specific splashdown point. Years later, we sent a rover over 292 million miles to land on Mars which sends us pictures and sound from another planet. I cannot comprehend how it was done, but I do not doubt it.

This is an amazing passage. Many wonder about what awaits us when we die. Cultures and beliefs from all over the world hold onto the idea of an afterlife, but those are mere hopes that bring little comfort. Paul tells us clearly what awaits each of us. Those who believe in Jesus and adhere to His Word will spend eternity with Him. Those who have passed will be raised first with imperishable bodies to meet Jesus in the air. Those who are still alive will be caught up next. That scenario boggles my mind as it is beyond my comprehension. However, I do not doubt it. If we only believe what we can understand, we will miss the most amazing aspects of this life. All of this is possible because the Word became flesh and lived among us. The Word then became our Passover Lamb so that we could be with Him forever. For those who reject Jesus, they, too, will live forever, but not with Him. That is the truth we need to be declaring.