

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 & Selected

Introduction

This morning will be the first of two or more sermons dealing with the transformation of believers at the coming of the Lord and being caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds and be with Him forevermore. This is commonly referred to as the Rapture. I have two primary reasons for spending this much time on this subject. First is that it is the next prophetic event that will take place, so we should have some understanding of what it will be so that we are adequately prepared for it. The second is that there is much confusion about the Rapture because it is a doctrine that can only be properly understood from details and inferences that come from many different passages. It takes quite a bit of digging around in the Scriptures in order to understand it. It will be one of my purposes to clear up some of the confusion including the questions that revolve around the timing of its occurrence. By the end of the last sermon in this series, you should understand the major arguments both pro and con for each position even if you disagree with my conclusions or have difficulty in coming to your own. Every Christian has a responsibility to seek to understand what the Lord has revealed to us in His word. My goal is to help in that process.

We will first be examining what Paul says about the Rapture and the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. This must be understood first in order to understand the greater details the apostle gives in 2 Thessalonians 2. The Rapture will be our focus today.

The Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will 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, will 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 will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

The Concern - 1 Thessalonians 4:13

To set the context, let me quickly go over the beginning of 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul is making pleas and exhortations to the Thessalonians that they walk to please God. He commends them for doing well in this, but encourages them to do even better, to excel, to abound in it. He points out three areas in which they were to do this. The first is in the pursuit of sanctification for that was God's will for them - and for all Christians. We are to be holy for God is holy. We are to live in manner that is contrary to the sinfulness of our society including abstaining from sexual immorality of every sort. Paul also warns that God is an avenger on those who do evil.

Second, though they were doing well at loving the brethren, he encourages them to excel, to abound still more in it. Third, Paul exhorts them to live their lives in a quiet fashion in which they would attend to their own affairs and work with the own hands so that they would behave properly toward outsiders and not have need.

Walking in a way to please God will include your view of and preparation for what will happen in the future. The last part of this chapter reveals that they had some confusion about the future which as

affecting them in the present, Verse 13 is the transition to that topic as Paul addresses what they were unformed, ignorant, without knowledge, confused concerning those that “*are asleep*,” an euphemism for death. The word used here, (κοιμωμένων / koimōmenōn), has a root meaning of lie down or upon, and since a dead body that is laid out can appear to be asleep, this word became used as a more pleasant way to refer to the deceased than bluntly saying he is dead. All nine times Paul uses this word he does so as a euphemism for someone who is dead. However, euphemisms can cause confusion.

Jesus used this word in John 11:11 to describe Lazarus which resulted in His disciples concluding that Lazarus would recover from his sickness. Jesus then had to bluntly tell them that Lazarus was dead. This confusion has also resulted in some churches teaching a doctrine called, “soul sleep,” in which the body is dead, but the soul is in a sleep like state waiting to be awakened at Jesus’ return. However, that would be contrary to the other insights the Scriptures give to us about the state of the soul after death in which there is definite cognate awareness. Paul’s statements in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord and Philippians 1:21 that *to live is Christ and to die is gain* certainly suggest this. However, Jesus’ story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 is clear that the souls of the dead are mentally aware.

The Thessalonians would have understood Paul’s metaphor without confusion because he continues on to state that his purpose is that they would not grieve as the rest who were without hope. The idea of hope here is having an assurance that allows you to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial. Funerals which lack hope are filled with overwhelming grief that is inconsolable. People will exhibit that in different ways ranging from extreme anger to extreme depression and from wailing to stone faced silence. The common thread is the deep pain of sorrow within the soul. Paul wants them to understand a truth of which they were unaware that would alleviate the grief with hope.

Please carefully note that distinction here. Paul is going to give them hope which will moderate their grief, not eliminate it. I have been among Christians who had the idea that Christians are not to grieve over the death of a loved one, and that is wrong. If you do not have sorrow when someone dies, there is something wrong in you. Even Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb and He knew he was about to raise him from the dead. Jesus has conquered death and given us hope that transcends it, but it is still an enemy and will be until Jesus returns. The closer the relationship, the greater the personal grief will be in missing that person. And while there will be joy that the Christian is with the Lord, there will still be sorrow that they are not present with us to participate in events that you know they would enjoy. It is common to hear references about what a loved one who has passed away would have enjoyed. It is proper to shed a tear when we remember someone we cared about that is no longer with us simply because we miss them. And I will add, it is proper to weep with those who are weeping for in doing so we show our empathy and that is comforting. We want our loved ones to be remembered.

It is proper for Christians to grieve, but we do not grieve as those who do not have hope. That being true let me quickly add here that the Christian may or may not go through the various “stages of grief” identified by various psychiatrists, so don’t try to analyze or stick people into those theories. (Yes, there are more theories about grief than just Kubler-Ross). In fact, the context here shows that Paul is addressing a very particular concern that had developed among the Thessalonians that those among them that had died would miss the return of Jesus. They were uncertain of what had happened to their souls. Look at vs. 14.

The Belief - 1 Thessalonians 4:14

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.*” This is the underlying truth that would bring comfort. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of our faith. Paul points out that these are the essential elements of the gospel stating in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, ³ “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,* ⁴ *and that He*

was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . .” All that Jesus claimed about Himself and all that He taught were confirmed when He conquered death and came out of the grave alive. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection was attested to by multiple witnesses on multiple occasions and even by multitudes at one time. Paul lists out Cephas, the twelve, more than 500 at one time, James, the Apostles and finally himself. These gospel accounts also include the women in the Garden of Gethsemane. Paul then argues in verses 17-20 that this resurrection is essential to our faith. If Christ had not been raised from the dead then faith in Christ would be in vain and those who had *“fallen asleep in Jesus have perished.”* But Paul continues, *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”*

Paul now applies these truths to the Thessalonians’ faith by assuring them here that God would be bringing with Him those who had already died. However, in order for that to happen, they would have to already be with God. I pointed out earlier several passages that showed that the soul had mental awareness after death. They also show that the souls of the righteous are *“at home with the Lord.”*

The Promise - 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Paul continues on in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to give them additional knowledge about what will happen. 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, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”*

Paul first points out that what he is telling them is not something he came up with on his own. What he is telling them has come *“by the word of the Lord.”* What Peter states in 2 Peter 1:20-21 applies to the apostle Paul, ²⁰ *“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”* Peter even later specifically states in 2 Peter 3:15-16 that Paul wrote Scripture. This is an important point for we are followers of Christ and not the fables, myths or musings of men. We need to have confidence that the writings which we hold to be sacred are from God who has revealed His inerrant word to us through men moved by the Holy Spirit.

Paul then gives a sequence of what will happen at Christ’s return. Those who are living and remaining do not precede those who have fallen asleep. Paul makes it clear in the next verse that he is referring here to the resurrection, but before I get to that, I need to point out two other important points from this verse.

First, these events occur at the *“coming of the Lord.”* The term here is παρουσία / parousia which according to TDNT has a general meaning of either *“to be present”* or *“to have come”* as in having arrived. I find that translating this here as *“coming”* causes confusion with a more common Greek word group for *“coming”* (έρχομαι / erchomai). Some want to make this a technical term for *“advent,”* but such usage would have to be determined by context, and the word does not really convey the idea of return. I think Young’s literal version does well as translating this as *“the presence of the Lord”* with the specific *“presence”* determined by the context, which in this passage will be specifically tied to being *“caught up,”* the rapture of believers in verse 17.

Second, note that Paul includes himself as someone that could be *“living and remaining”* when this event happens. This brings up the doctrine of what is called the imminent return of Jesus. I will go into greater detail about this doctrine in the future, but for today, I just want to point out that it is developed from the many admonitions in the New Testament that we are to be ready and alert for the Lord’s return (Luke 12:39-40 & also Matthew 24:44; 25:1-13) for He is near and at hand (1 Peter 1:13 James 5:8,9), so we should have an eager anticipation of His coming (Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:7-8; Hebrews 9:28) keeping in mind that He said He is *“coming quickly”* (Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12 & 20) and would return unexpectedly *“like a thief”* (Revelation 3:3; 16:15). Simply stated, Jesus can return for His church at anytime. Though other prophecies could be fulfilled before that blessed event, none must be fulfilled prior to it.

The Future Fulfillment - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Verses 16-17 describe additional elements and the sequence in which they will happen when the παρουσία / parousia of the Lord occurs. 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 will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*

First, the Lord’s presence comes about because He Himself will descend from heaven accompanied by A) a shout with the word here, κέλευσμα / keleusma, referring to a call of command. B) One of the archangel’s will add his voice to the shout. C) The trumpet of God will also sound. Second, the dead in Christ are resurrected first. Third, those alive and remaining are changed and also caught up. Fourth, both groups will join together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Fifth, they will then always be with the Lord.

This will not be a hidden event as so many of the cults have claimed in trying to explain away their false predictions. That is the danger of those who have set dates for Jesus’ return, for when it did not happen as predicted it proved they were false prophets. However, in order to save face and continue their deception, they spiritualize it. Jesus does not return in a hidden manner. Here in 1 Thessalonians there is a cacophony of sounds - shouting, an archangel’s voice, and the trumpet of God. All that sound will get people’s attention. Revelation 1:7 proclaims, *“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him . . .”* This matches what the two angels told the disciples in Acts 1:11 that Jesus would return in the same way they had seen Him go into heaven, which was into a cloud.

Paul had said in verse 15 that those living and remaining would not precede those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, and now he specifically states the dead would rise first. Since their souls were already with the Lord as I pointed out earlier, we must conclude that their resurrection bodies are raised to join their souls at this event. Paul describes these new bodies in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. These are not bodies of flesh and blood which are perishable and mortal and therefore cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Paul states that the dead will be raised imperishable and the formerly mortal bodies will put on immortality. Though this is a mystery to us, it is nevertheless true. Paul also states in verses 51-52 that *“we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”* The word for changed here (ἀλλάσσω / allassō) means to be altered in character or nature. Some versions translate this happening in the “blink of an eye,” which is rapid, but more often it is translated as “twinkling of an eye” which refers to the sparkle that can occur as light going through the cornea reflects off of the lens to shine back. That is even faster. God can transform things instantly and so shall it be in gaining resurrection bodies.

The mystery is that we do not know what these resurrection bodies will be like other than 1 John 3:2 stating that we will be changed to become like Jesus when He becomes visible because we will see Him as He is. In addition to being imperishable and immortal Jesus’ resurrection body had physical characteristics. He could be touched for He invited the disciples and later Thomas to touch His hands and side (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:27), and He had to tell Mary to stop clinging to Him after she recognized Him outside the tomb (John 20:17). He ate broiled fish when He first appeared to the eleven after His resurrection (Luke 24:41-43) and he cooked bread and fish for them in Galilee (John 21:9-13). Yet Jesus’ resurrection body also defied our understanding of physics. He could appear suddenly in a room with shut doors (John 20:19; 26) and just as suddenly vanish while Cleopas and Simon were watching (Luke 24:31).

This event in which the bodies of the saints both dead and alive will be suddenly transformed and caught up together to meet the Lord in the air is often referred to as the “Rapture” which comes from the Latin word, *“rapers,”* which was used to translate ἀρπάζω / harpadzo in verse 17 which means to be “caught up” or “snatched away.” The timing of when the Rapture will happen is often debated, and sadly, sometimes in ways that break proper fellowship with other believers. Frankly, I believe that is

wrong for we should be gracious with one another when debating this issue or any issue. Even when arguing about fundamental issues of the faith, the Lord's slave is to be firm in His conviction on what God teaches in the Bible, yet still follow Paul's instructions in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 to be kind, able to teach, patient and with *"gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."*

That is the proper attitude, but that does not mean your convictions have to be flimsy or that your arguments cannot be strong. My own conviction after many decades of study on the topic, and the doctrinal statement of this church, is that the Rapture will occur at or near the beginning of the 70th week described in Daniel 9:27 which is also known as the Tribulation Period. This is called the Pre-Tribulational position. A primary reason for this is the doctrine of imminence as already mentioned, particularly that we are to be eagerly anticipating and looking for the Lord's return and not other things such as the Anti-Christ. Secondary to that are the passages such as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 that are clear that Jesus *"rescues us from the wrath to come"* and *"that God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."* The Tribulation period concerns God's wrath on Israel and the world and not believers who are not even mentioned in Revelation after chapter 3. I will be talking more about that next week. While no position is without difficult areas, the various mid-Tribulation and post-Tribulational positions are simply not as strong in their Biblical support.

The promise is that all believers will be gathered together in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air and will always be with Him after that. This is referring to physical proximity and not just His spiritual presence as in the present time (Matthew 28:29).

The Comfort - 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Paul concludes with a command to *"comfort one another with these words."* He did not want them to be ignorant of these important truths about the Lord's promises to us concerning our future at His return. These promises give us hope for the present and the future. Those who have already died will not miss the Rapture that occurs when Lord is present in the clouds and calls His church to Himself. Our souls are immediately with the Lord upon death, and they will even get their resurrection bodies before those that are alive and remaining. This is comfort for believers that grieve over the departure of a loved one.

It is also a comfort for those that are facing tribulation in this world including death, for it is the assurance of what will happen to them. You are only passing through this life, and Christians are only a heart beat away from heavenly bliss. Paul put it this way in Romans 8:18, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* Having a promise that I will be with the Lord forever transcends all the temporary problems I have or will have in this life here for it not only assures where I am going, but it also gives me the purpose for the road of life I am currently walking.

The Rapture, the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord

I will be expanding on the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ and the timing of the Rapture next week for they are related to the reasons for them. For the remainder of today's message I want to make some clear distinctions between the Rapture, the Second Coming of the Jesus and the Day of the Lord. Much confusion between these is caused because clear distinctions are not made leading to mixing details that do not belong together resulting in much confusion.

I will start by simply repeating something that I said last week about the *"Day of the Lord"* and demonstrated in the chart that was handed out previously. The usage of the phrase in any particular passage must be defined by the context of that passage. In the Hebrew scriptures, the phrase could be used to refer to something imminent, something near historical, something eschatological or a mixture of

them. In the New Testament the phrase only refers to something eschatological with 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10 also referring to something imminent. Equating the day of the Lord with the promised Second Coming of Christ cannot be done unless the context of the passage clearly demonstrates that is what is in view, and it also must deal with whatever details are in that passage. Context is king. I pointed out last week that in 2 Peter 3 the apostle jumps from the beginning of the day of the Lord to its culmination in the destruction of the present heavens and earth and creation of new ones while completely skipping over the Rapture, the Tribulation period and the millennial reign. His purpose was to point to the end of the ages and challenge us to live in the present time in light of that reality. If what exists now is going to eventually burn, then as Jesus described in Matthew 6:19-20, living life trying to store up treasure on earth is foolish. Instead, life should be lived with an effort of storing up treasures in heaven which will remain eternally.

In the future we will examine the relationship of the Day of the Lord with the Tribulation period, the Millennium and the Second Coming of Christ. For right now, I want to make sure the distinction between the Rapture and the Second Coming is understood. There are theological positions that deny the Rapture as a separate event because they equate it with the Second Coming (which is also referred to as the Second Advent). However, as a careful examination of the chart I have included in your notes today shows, they are two distinct events and they have two distinct purposes.

The chart lists Zechariah 14 and ten New Testament passages that refer to either the Rapture or the Second Coming. There are thirty specific events or characteristics described in those passages. It does not take a lot of analysis to see that what is described fall into two distinct groups. Only the Lord descending or coming from heaven and returning in, on or with clouds is common to both groups. The first group consists of lines 1-12 which are described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57, Luke 17:22-37, Matthew 24:32-44 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. I have indicated that first group in the chart by ***bold italics*** and bold lines surrounding it. The events listed in lines 13-30 and the remaining seven passages make up the second group. Even a cursory comparison shows the first group is quite distinct from or even contradictory to the second group. Lets go over some of these in detail.

Both groups are the same in Line 23 in that Jesus' return from heaven is either in (ἐν / en) or on (ἐπί / epi) the clouds. That makes sense because if Jesus was completely in the cloud you would not be able to see Him, but if He is visible yet surrounded by clouds, that could be properly described as either in or on the clouds. Both groups are similar in Line 1 in that Jesus returns from heaven, however, only 1 Thessalonians 4:16 in group 1 describes Jesus as "descending" (καταβαίνω / katabainō) from heaven whereas the verses in group 2 state He will "come" (ἔρχομαι / erchomai) from heaven. Perhaps an insignificant distinction since to come from heaven which is above you must also descend, yet it is a distinction in description.

There is a great distinction between the Rapture in group 1 and the Second Coming in group 2 in the location of Jesus and the actions that takes place. In group 1, the only action on earth is the raising of the dead and the glorification of all the saints who are caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In group 2 there are many actions on the earth including great tribulation, nations gathered to fight the Lord, earthquakes, and the Messiah's feet setting down on the Mount of Olives which then splits in two. Actions in heaven in group 2 include celestial signs and the Lord returning on a horse from there accompanied by angels, his holy ones and the armies of heaven.

Both groups indicate Jesus' return will be heralded with a lot of noise. In group 2 there is a great trumpet described in Matthew 24:31 while in group 1 there is a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 with 1 Corinthians 15:52 adding that the bodies of believers will be changed from mortal to immortal and perishable to imperishable at the last of a series of trumpets. Only 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 describe this transformation of Christians to receive glorified bodies and then being caught up along with the transformed bodies of saints that had previously died to meet the Lord in the air be with Him always. In group 2, Matthew 24:29-31 and Mark 13:27 do

describe the angels gathering the “*elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other,*” but this is after the tribulation of those days and the celestial signs are given which removes the events that follow from being unexpected. There is no mention of them receiving glorified bodies or of those who had previously died joining them or to where they are gathered. There would not be a lot of comfort to the Thessalonians to be told those who have previously died will gain their glorified bodies at the rapture, but you who are alive and remain will go through the tribulation.

I have placed Paul’s description of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5 in group 1 because the near antecedent is the rapture in the previous paragraph in chapter 4. Paul emphasizes the sudden and unexpected start of the day of the Lord. It comes like a “*thief in the night*” and at a time when people are saying “*peace and safety.*” They are unaware and unprepared for the sudden destruction that will come upon them following the transformation of and catching up of those who are the Lord’s both alive and dead. The passage then goes on to be ready. We will examine 1 Thessalonians 5 more next week.

I have also placed Matthew 24:32-51 and Luke 17:22-37 in with group 1 because of their emphasis upon the sudden and unexpected coming of the Lord. Both passages state that it will be like the “days of Noah” with life continuing as normal with eating and drinking and weddings, but life just prior to the second coming will not be usual due to the turmoil on earth and signs in the heavens. Matthew 24:43 also describes this as coming suddenly and unexpectedly like a thief in the night. The warnings to be alert for the “Son of Man is coming an hour when you do not think he will” fits well the Rapture. It is for those reasons that I disagree with the theological positions that interpret these verses as the Second Coming and the sudden disappearance of people and gathering of saints by the angels as preparation for the sheep and goat judgment at the end of the Tribulation period.

Conclusions

The relationship of all the events described that will take place in the end times can be confusing. It is only with difficulty that theological systems have been developed that strive to make sense of the events to come and their sequencing since there are multiple sensible interpretations to some passages. However, there is only one correct interpretation, and though that will only be completely clear after all the events have taken place, we will be closer to it as we interpret more difficult passages by those that are clear. What I have strived to do today is to clearly show that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two distinct events.

The Second Coming will be preceded by many signs on earth and in the heavens. Messiah will come from heaven in the clouds riding a horse and accompanied by angels, His holy ones and the armies of heaven. He will physically touch down on the Mount of Olives which will split in two. His angels will separate the elect from the ungodly.

The Rapture will happen suddenly and unexpectedly when Jesus appears with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. His saints, both dead and alive and remaining, are then transformed to received glorified bodies which are caught up (raptured) together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air to be with Him always.

Those theological systems that either deny the rapture or try to make it a part of the Second Coming either ignore or confuse the Scriptures since they make it clear that they are separate events and as I will point out next week, have separate purposes. The promise of the Rapture is a comfort to the believer and it is the next prophetic event that will take place. Next week I will explain the doctrine of imminence and why each person needs to be ready for the Rapture to happen at anytime.

Sermon Notes - 11/26/2023
The Reality of the Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 & Selected

Introduction

The Rapture is the _____ prophetic event that will take place, so we should have some understanding of it
There is much _____ about the reality of the Rapture, its purpose and its timing

The Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Concern - 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Paul commends them for doing well, but encourages them to _____ more in sanctification, love & godly life
Walking in a way to please God includes your view & preparation for what will happen in the _____
There was confusion about what would happen to those that were “asleep in Jesus” - euphemism for _____
Paul’s purpose was so that believers would not _____ as the rest who have no hope
Christians still grieve over friends & loved ones that die, but we have _____ that extends beyond the grave
Christians may or may not go through the “_____ of grief” theorized by various psychologists

The Belief - 1 Thessalonians 4:14

The _____ of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of our faith and our hope - 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 17-20
Those who have died in Christ are currently with _____ (2 Cor 5:6-8) and their bodies will be resurrected

The Promise - 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Paul’s teaching comes “by the _____” and not his own musings (2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16)
These events occur at the parousia / parousia - “be _____,” “to have come” - of the Lord
Paul includes himself as someone that could be “_____ and remaining” when this event happens.
We are to be ready & alert with eager _____ of the Lord’s return for He is near & coming quickly

The Future Fulfillment - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The order of fulfillment is: 1) The Lord Himself _____ from heaven with A) A shout, B) The voice of the archangel. C) The trumpet of God.
2) The dead in Christ rise & are resurrected. 3) Those who alive and remain are changed.
4) Both groups are _____ together to meet the Lord in the air. 5) They will always be with the Lord

There is _____ about this as claimed by false teachers trying to explain away their false predictions
The resurrection body is _____ & immortal (1 Cor. 15:50-54) & it happens in the twinkling of an eye
It will be like Jesus’ resurrection body (1 John 3:2) - _____ to touch & eat, yet defies physics
Rapture is from the Latin, “rapers,” translated from aJrpavzw / harpadzo - “_____,” “snatched away”
Hold firm convictions, but be patient & _____ (2 Tim. 2:24-26) in the debate over the Rapture’s timing
We teach the pre-tribulational position: The rapture occurs at or near the _____ of the Tribulation period
Main support is the _____ of the Lord’s return & the Tribulation being about Israel, not the Church

The Comfort - 1 Thessalonians 4:18

These promises give us _____ for the present and the future concerning those asleep in the Lord & ourselves
The sufferings of the present do not compare with the glories of the _____ (Romans 8:18)

The Rapture, the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord

The "Day of the Lord" must be defined by the _____ of the passage in which it is used

2 Peter 3 _____ from the beginning of the Day of the Lord to the destruction & renewal of heavens & earth

The wise live present life with a purpose of preparing for _____ (Matt. 6:19-20)

Charting specific events related to Christ's return reveal _____ groupings quite distinct from each other

Common to both groups is Jesus descending or coming from _____ in or on clouds

In the Rapture, Jesus remains in the _____. In the Second Coming, Jesus' feet _____ on the Mount of Olives

The Rapture includes a _____ & voice of the archangel as well as trumpets

The Rapture includes _____ of dead Christians and living Christians changed to glorified bodies

The Second Coming occurs _____ the Tribulation & includes earthquakes & celestial signs preceding it

The Rapture is _____ and unexpected - like a thief in the night - as in the days of Noah

Conclusions

Distinguishing & sequencing end times events is difficult, but _____ passages interpret confusing ones

The Rapture and the Second Coming (Advent) are _____ events

They are distinguished by _____ in the events associated with each

Denial of the rapture or making it a part of the Second Coming either _____ or confuses Scripture

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down the scripture references and look them up later 2) Count how many times the "Rapture" and "the Second Coming" are mentioned 3) Discuss with your parents the difference between the Rapture & the Second Coming.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What does Paul exhort the Thessalonians to do in the first part of 1 Thess. 4? What was their confusion about those that were asleep in the Lord? Why does Paul use an euphemism for death? How is a Christian's grief different from a non-Christian's? Why is the resurrection of Jesus central to Christian faith and hope? How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? What happens to those "asleep in the Lord" and those that are alive and remain at Jesus presence in the clouds? What is the resurrection body like? What accompanies Jesus' presence in the clouds? What is the origin of the word "rapture" and what does it mean? What attitude should be held toward those that believe the timing of the Rapture will be different from what you believe? Why have that attitude? How does Paul's teaching about the rapture give comfort to grieving Christians? Why is context crucial to understanding the meaning of the Day of the Lord? Use the Comparison Chart of Rapture vs. Second Coming Verses to distinguish the two events. What differences make it clear that these are two separate events and cannot be one event? Why is it important to distinguish the Rapture and the Second Coming as two separate events? What manner of life should you be living in light of God's promises concerning the future? Are you living that manner of life? If not, what needs to change?