



1 Thessalonians

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For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 1 Thessalonians 4:16

In this verse, Paul explains the dead in Christ rising first by beginning with "For." After this word, he will give details about what will occur which are parenthetical in nature. Then the final sentence picks up the main thought once again. To see this laid out, "For (...) the dead in Christ will rise first." The words between these two thoughts simply give details of the sequence of events which will lead up to this. That sequence of events begins with, "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout."

The word translated as "will descend" is only used this one time concerning the second coming of Christ. It was used by John concerning Christ's first advent when He came as a Man. It is also used when the Spirit descended on Christ at His baptism in Matthew 3.

Here the word "shout" is one found only here in Scripture. It signifies the shout of a command. Further, the word translated as "with" is the Greek word signifying "in." The clause reads, "Because Himself the Lord in a loud command, in the voice of an archangel..." The context does not make it known if this is actually the voice of the Lord, or the voice of the archangel. John 5:25-29 speaks of the dead rising at the voice of the Son of Man, but with the mentioning of the archangel, it may be that he is the chosen herald, announcing the coming of Christ. Thus it would add a dignity to the event which is often seen among earthly kings and nobles. It is possible, as some interpret this, that there is both a shout of the Lord which is accompanied by the voice of the archangel, thus these are two separate parts to the events being described.

Concerning "the voice of an archangel," who is being described can only be speculated on. The term "archangel" is only used here and in Jude 1:9 where Michael is named. Michael is then identified in Daniel as "one of the chief princes," and "your prince" when speaking to Daniel, an Israelite. As he is one of a number of "princes," it could be him or another unnamed

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

archangel. Jewish writings do identify others, and Gabriel is noted in both Daniel and Luke as an angel, and as he is said in Luke to “stand in the presence of God,” and because he is the herald of the messages given to Daniel and Zechariah, he is a likely choice to again herald the sound of this memorable event in redemptive history. This is certainly possible because the Greek has no article before “archangel.” Instead it simply says, “(an) archangel.” This is important because in Jude, Michael is identified with an article, “the archangel.” This then means that he is not the only archangel, and so it is highly inappropriate to definitively single Michael out for this event, especially when it relates to the church, and not specifically to Israel.

Paul next says, “and with the trumpet of God.” Again, the Greek preposition is “in” the trumpet of God. It is as if His descent occurs during the shout and during the blast, signifying that He is the center of attention, not the voice or the blast itself. They sound forth only to call our attention to Him. It is reminiscent of the amazing events of the descending of the Lord upon Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:16-20. The sound of a trumpet from God is referenced elsewhere in Scripture many times as well.

Finally, Paul says, “And the dead in Christ will rise first.” This is the explanation of the previous verse. Those who are dead in Christ will hear the events, they will respond to the call, and they will come forth... to life! To everlasting life!

Life application: If you want life, you need Christ. Call on Christ and be one of those who will be taken up to be with Him forever. His word is true, the message has been written, and we have the surety of God’s word that these things will come about.

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. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

The substance of what these words mean is highly debated. The word “Then” signifies “afterwards.” In essence, what precedes is an essential precursor to what then occurs. Some argue then that there could be a large amount of time between the two events. In other words, the dead will be changed, and then at some future point those alive will be changed. This analysis is incorrect for two reasons.

First, it would mean that remaining alive until the coming of the Lord has a different value assigned to it than dying in the Lord, something the Bible never implies. Secondly, it would then contradict 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 which clearly states that all shall be changed in in the twinkling of an eye at the sound of the trumpet. The only distinction between the dead and the living are that the dead are first raised in order to receive their glorified bodies, at which

time we shall join them in that flash of a moment. The word “Then” simply means that one event precedes the other, but they are otherwise all but simultaneous.

Next, we are told that when the dead are raised, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them.” In this instantaneous act, we will be “caught up.” The word is *harpazó*, and it signifies a sudden snatching away by force. A comparable thought is someone robbing another. They don’t just grab and walk. Rather, they grab with decisiveness, and they remove themselves from the scene with all alacrity. This is what will occur with all believers, and it will be with all suddenness. We will be in this body, and then we won’t.

In this occurrence, both those who were dead, and those who are still alive at that time, will join together “in the clouds.” There is no definite article with the word “clouds,” and so it says, “in clouds.” This has led some to conclude that the believers will be gathered together to resemble clouds. The lack of the article actually seems to demand this interpretation. In Revelation 1:7, Christ is said to come with the clouds. There the article is used. If one accepts that these are believers returning with Him, then the terminology of believers being gathered as clouds fits well. It would also be a New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament picture where the Lord descended with a cloud at Sinai.

However, the translation “in the clouds” is also a possibility. Either way, there is a joining together of the people of the church to be with the Lord, either “in clouds” due to the gathering, or “in the clouds” due to the location. It is a moment where the hopes and dreams of the people of God will be fully and completely realized. We will no longer live by faith, but by sight. We will have the reward which our faith was based upon. Paul then further describes the event as, “to meet the Lord in the air.”

Here the word is *aér*, and it indicates the lower air; the air we breathe. Rather than meeting on solid ground, we will meet in a place which otherwise could not support physical beings. Thus shows that our new bodies will have a completely new nature. We will be like Christ at the time of the resurrection where He could suddenly appear behind closed doors, and who ascended to the Father in front of the disciples. One can speculate all day about what these bodies will be like, but the fact that we will meet the Lord with them in the air shows that they will be completely different than what we now possess. Anyone with acrophobia now will no longer have to worry about that.

Finally, Paul says, “And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Here, Paul doesn’t tell us whether that means in heaven or on the earth. He simply makes the statement. Depending on how one perceives the events which surround this catching away (the rapture), will dictate where one believes we will be. But without even going into that, being “always” with the Lord

does not necessitate that we will physically be there with Him at all times. It can simply signify that we will always have access to Him.

A bride is always with her husband, even if she isn't in the same room (or even in the same country) as he is at any given moment. This verse is often taken to unhealthy extremes which then turn into demanding analyses of other verses in Scripture. This should not be the case. As the Bride of Christ, and indeed we are His bride (see 2 Corinthians 11:2), we will always be with the Lord – even if not physically at His side at all times; we shall never be parted from Him.

One item of timing which does need to be addressed is that of immediately returning to earth with the Lord after this catching away. This is held to by some, but that is to be rejected outright. Paul elsewhere speaks of believers standing before the judgment seat of Christ. It would make no sense for Christ to return to judge the earth before He has first judged His people, and then dined with them at a bridal ceremony.

As a final note, this catching away is alluded to by John in Revelation 4:1 where he saw a door opened in heaven. From Chapter 1 through Chapter 3 of Revelation, the church is specifically addressed. From verse 4:2, the church is not mentioned even once until Revelation 19:11 when Christ returns. At that time, His saints are with Him. The rapture that Paul speaks of here is then logically an event which occurs prior to the tribulation period. For this, and many other obvious reasons, it is illogical to point to a rapture at any other point, including a mid-tribulation rapture. The timing of the rapture will continue to be explored in the beginning verses of Chapter 5.

Further, the Old Testament gives definite types and shadows of what God would do in this rapture event, as He does with all other major events related to redemptive history. To see the rapture-related pictures, and to understand that He has already shown us what lies ahead, you can watch this video (a sermon by a rather handsome fellow) which clearly shows this as being the case: [The Rapture – Old Testament types and Shadows](#)

In the end, God has determined that His saints will be with Him forever, beginning with this event known as the rapture. It will then be followed by a seven-year period of wonder in His presence, and seven years of hell on earth. After that, we will return with Him at the end of the tribulation period. This is what the Bible clearly and exactly portrays to His people; the church, which is His bride.

Life application: The word is written. Study to show yourself approved. And have faith that it will turn out exactly as God has revealed.