

Up, Up and Away - the Rapture

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)

[1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) (NKJV) 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.

Most Christians today view this verse as describing an escape from the troubles of this world. They believe that one day soon, (it is always soon, it was "soon" when Jesus spoke it to the Thessalonians and it is still soon today) Jesus is going to physically appear in the sky, and immediately all the dead are going to be resurrected and rise to meet Him, and the living Christians will be caught up in the clouds with them to be with Christ. They believe that Christians will physically be "**raptured**" off of this planet. I'm sure you've seen the pictures of the unmanned cars crashing and bodies coming out of the graves with everyone going up into the sky.

Are you aware that this "rapture of the church" idea is not a historical teaching of the church but something that was started around 1830 by the Plymouth Brethren? It was popularized in America by the *Scofield Reference Bible* and by elaborate End Time event charts published by Clarence Larkin. During the twentieth century, the "physical rapture" of the Church became a dominant eschatological view.

Many have predicted when this event was to happen: Mikkel Dahl predicated in *The Midnight Cry* that the present era would end by 1980. Reginald Edward Duncan predicted in *The Coming Russian Invasion of America* that the Millennium would begin in 1979. Emil Gaverluk, of the Southwest Radio Church, predicted that the rapture would occur by 1981.

In 1948, Israel became a nation, many saw this as very significant in Bible prophecy. They believed that within a generation of that time (forty years), the rapture would occur. Edgar C. Whisenant wrote the book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1988*. Six million copies of his work caused quite a stir among evangelicals in the summer and fall of 1988. Mr. Whisenant laboriously demonstrated why Christ would return to the earth in September 1988. Regional news reports noted that a number of Christians took his message so seriously that they quit their jobs in anticipation of Christ's imminent return.

Whisenant remarked, "Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong, and I say that unequivocally. There is no way Biblically that I can be wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town." When September of 1988 came to an end and there was no rapture Whisenant published a new book called, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*. In this book he said, "My mistake was that my mathematical calculations were off by one year." Guess what? He was wrong again!

Hal Lindsey said:

When the Jewish people, after nearly 2,000 years of exile, under relentless persecution, became a nation again on 14 May, 1948 the "fig tree" put forth its first leaves. Jesus said that this would indicate that He was "at the door," ready to return. Then He said, "**Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**" (Matthew 24:34 NASB).

What generation? Obviously, in context, the generation that would see the signs -- chief among them the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct

deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so. (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, pp. 53-54).

A Korean group placed newspaper advertisements predicting that the rapture would take place on October 28, 1992. When nothing happened, Kim Tae-jin replied, "We got the message from God wrong. Jesus will be back in several years."

In the summer of 1992, Charles R. Taylor wrote in the *Bible Prophecy News* that Jesus' return would occur in the fall of the same year: "What you are starting to read probably is my final issue of *Bible Prophecy News*, for Bible prophecy fulfillments indicate that Jesus Christ our Lord will most likely return for us at the rapture of the Church before the Fall 1992 issue can be printed."

In his book, *Armagedon: Appointment with Destiny*, Grant Jeffrey writes, "The year A.D. 2000 is a probable termination date for the 'last days.'" Lester Sumrall wrote in his book *I Predict 2000 A.D.*: "I predict the absolute fullness of man's operation on planet Earth by the year 2000 A.D."

What do you think? Will the rapture happen in the year 2000? With all the wrong guesses, you would think that folks would stop making predictions, but they keep on guessing.

Let's look at the Biblical text that is used to support the modern idea of the "physical rapture" of the church:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep 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 by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 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. 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. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The first question that we need to ask here is, "Who is the Apostle Paul writing to?" Who is the "you" that he did not want to be ignorant? The clear and un-refutable answer is the Thessalonian Christians of the first century.

As we read and study a text of the Bible, we must keep in mind **audience relevance** - what did the original audience understand this to mean? The Bible was written **for us but not to us**. I have had some Christians flip out on me for making that statement. They think that the Bible is written to us. It should be quite simple to show them otherwise. I was discussing this very subject with a man in my office who said, "All the Bible is written to us." To show him how ridiculous this position was, I took him to:

Joshua 6:3 (NKJV) "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.

I asked him, "Is this command to march around Jericho to you?" He replied, "Yes, it is." At that point I ended our discussion. This is an absolutely insane view. I don't think that he actually believed that he was commanded to march around Jericho (even though he said he was), but to admit that would be to admit that the Bible is written for us and not to us.

If you ignore audience relevance and view this verse as written to you, what do you have?

Joshua 6:25 (NKJV) And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. SO SHE DWELLS IN ISRAEL TO THIS DAY, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

You have a lady that is well over 3,000 years old. Is Rahab still living in Israel today? Of course not! Why does the Bible say she is still living in Israel today when she isn't? When the book of Joshua was written, she was still living in Israel. This statement was true and accurate when it was written. But to us, some 3500 years later, it must be viewed in light of audience relevance. Let's try another verse:

2 Timothy 4:21 (NKJV) Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

Is this written to us? Where are we to go before winter? Which winter? Paul was writing to Timothy. When? He was to come before the winter of AD 67.

Philippians 2:19-23 (NKJV) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you SHORTLY (*tacheos*), that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his (Timothy's) proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him AT ONCE, as soon as I see how it goes with me.

The Greek word for "shortly" is *tacheos*. According to Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon, *tachos* is used in the LXX and certain non-canonical writings to mean speed, quickness, swiftness, haste, suddenly.

Are you excited about Timothy's soon arrival? Why not? The Bible says that Paul will send him "shortly." But I don't know of any Christians that are looking for Timothy to arrive soon. Christians understand that Paul was speaking to the Philippians in the first century when he said this. They don't understand the "shortly" to be to them but to the Philippians of the first century. Why then, when it comes to the subject of the return of Christ, do they want to ignore the principle of audience relevance?

When Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, he was writing to Thessalonian Christians who live in the first century. We MUST understand this if we are going to understand what he is saying.

Let's look at this text and see if we can't understand what the Lord is teaching.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

First of all, who are those who **sleep in Jesus**? To understand who they are, we need to know what the "hope" was that the Thessalonian believers had but that the unsaved didn't have.

THE "HOPE" OF ISRAEL WAS THE RESURRECTION:

Acts 24:15 (NKJV) "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

Acts 26:6-8 (NKJV) "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. 8 "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"

It is clear from this last verse that Paul sees the **resurrection** of the dead as that which fulfills "the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers."

Hosea 13:14 (NKJV) "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.

So, the "hope" that Paul is talking about to the Thessalonians is the **resurrection**.

What exactly did they understand about "the resurrection"? The traditional view that is held by most of the church is this: When a believer dies, their body goes into the grave and their spirit goes to heaven to be with the Lord. They are in a disembodied state awaiting the resurrection at the end of time. Then, at the end of time, the Lord returns, resurrects all the decayed bodies of the dead saints, puts them back together, then changes the physically resurrected bodies into spiritual immortal bodies like Christ's.

One of the major problems with this view is that Paul taught that the resurrection was "about to happen" in his day:

Acts 24:15 (NKJV) "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be (*mello* -about to be) a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

So, what is the resurrection that was about to happen in Paul's day? It was God removing all the Old Testament dead saints out of Hades and taking them to heaven to live in His presence. Prior to Jesus' messianic work, no one went to Heaven:

John 3:13 (NKJV) "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

Prior to Jesus' messianic work, all who died went to a holding place of the dead and waited for the atoning work of Christ and the resurrection from the dead. Until Christ paid for man's sin, he could not go into God's presence. To be taken out of Sheol and brought into the presence of the Lord is what the Bible calls resurrection. See [The Resurrection From the Dead](#).

Now, back to our question, Who are those who "**sleep in Jesus**" that Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14? They are the dead saints of the Old Covenant age that were in Sheol/Hades. Paul assures the Thessalonians that when Christ returned he would rescue the Old Covenant saints from the grave- they would be resurrected.

It appears as though the Thessalonians were concerned for their departed brethren. Paul reassures them by telling them in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 not to worry, for they would rise with Christ at the Parousia, and, "We who remain alive will follow in our turn!" This is directed very specifically toward the first-century Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 (NKJV) 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

Notice what Paul wrote: "By the word of the Lord, that **we** who are **alive**, and **remain until** the coming of the Lord" The "**we**" who "**are alive, and remain**" are indeed **TIME STATEMENTS**, for the "**we**" **MUST** be seen as the collective group of Paul and his audience. They (Paul and the Thessalonians) were expecting the return of Christ in **their** lifetime. This is very clear throughout the book:

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 (NKJV) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (NKJV) so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and the Thessalonians were clearly expecting to see the return of Christ in their lifetime. Notice also:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 (NKJV) since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us....

Paul, speaking to the Thessalonians of the first century, says that God will repay with tribulation those who trouble them thus giving them rest. When does he say he will do this?

2 Thessalonians 1:7a.... WHEN THE LORD JESUS IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 WHEN HE COMES, IN THAT DAY, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

The Thessalonian believers will be given rest from their enemies when the Lord returns in His second coming. If the second coming did not happen in their lifetime, the Lord gave them false hope and, in fact, deceived them.

Paul is assuring the Thessalonians that Christ would return in their lifetime and that those who were alive at that time would not go into God's presence ahead of the dead saints. Young's Literal Translation puts it this way:

1 Thessalonians 4:15 (YLT) for this to you we say in the word of the Lord, that we who are living -- who do remain over to the presence of the Lord -- may not precede those asleep,

Let's move on to the next verse in our text:

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV) 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.

If we are going to rightly interpret the Word of God, we must diligently work at it, applying the rules of hermeneutics. The primary rule of hermeneutics is called: **the Analogy of Faith** -- this means that Scripture interprets Scripture. No part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture.

As we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see that this is apocalyptic language speaking of judgment. Comparing this text to a parallel text in Matthew 24 will help us to better understand its meaning.

Matthew 24:30-31 (KJV) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Does that sound familiar? It should, this is a parallel text to the Thessalonian passage. Jesus spoke these words in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem and said that **their** generation would see all these things fulfilled (Matthew 24:34). In biblical language, "**clouds**" are symbolic of God's wrath and judgment against the enemies of His people. David said that the Lord delivered him from his enemies while descending on clouds in Psalm 18:3-15. The Lord said that He would ride into Egypt on a cloud and punish them:

Isaiah 19:1 (KJV) The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

The Lord did not literally ride on a cloud but Egypt did receive this judgment at the hands of the Assyrians (Isaiah 20:1-6). The idea of Jesus physically coming on the clouds would have been contrary to the nature of their understanding of the Old Testament prophets.

A comparison between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Matthew 24 is fascinating. As we keep in mind that Jesus uses apocalyptic language in Matthew 24: 29-35, we can't expect the same language to be literal in 1 Thessalonians 4-5. Those who believe the coming in Matthew refers to the spiritual events surrounding Jerusalem's fall would insist that we not literalize the clouds, the angels or the trumpet blast. If they are not literal in Matthew, why would they be in Thessalonians? Matthew is the source of the language in Thessalonians!

1. Christ Himself Returns	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:16
2. From Heaven	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:16
3. With a Shout	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:16
4. Accompanied by Angels	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:16
5. With Trumpet of God	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:16
6. Believers Gathered	Matt. 24:31	I Thess. 4:17
7. In Clouds	Matt. 24:30	I Thess. 4:17
8. Time Unknown	Matt. 24:36	I Thess. 5:1-2
9. Will Come as a Thief	Matt. 24:43	I Thess. 5:2,4
10. Unbelievers Unaware of Impending Judgment	Matt. 24:37-39	I Thess. 5:3
11. Judgment Comes as Travail upon Expectant Mother	Matt. 24:8	I Thess. 5:3
12. Believers to Watch	Matt. 24:42	I Thess. 5:4
13. Warning Against Drunkenness	Matt. 24:49	I Thess. 5:7

In Matthew 24, Jesus predicted his coming to gather together the saints in that generation. In 1 Thessalonians 4-5, Paul spoke of the same coming of the Lord to gather the saints. How many comings of the Lord, with his angels, in fire, in power and glory, to gather the saints, are there in the NT? Just ONE! The conclusion is inescapable: 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is dealing with exactly the same coming, judgment, and gathering that Matt. 24 is.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV) 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.

Paul is talking to the Thessalonians about Christ's coming in judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70. When this happened, the Old Covenant saints were raised out of Hades and brought into the presence of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV) 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.

This is the verse that the physical rapture theory comes from. A little time spent looking at the Greek words should quickly dispel many false notions.

Let's start with the first word in the verses -the word "**then.**" This is the Greek word *epeita*. Normally, when a sequence of events is described, the simple word *eita* "then" is used. *Eita* is best translated as "at that time" or "next". *Eita* is used to indicate an immediate sequence. We see this in:

John 19:26-27 (NKJV) When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then (eita)He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

This is a series of events - one immediately after the other.

But in our text, the Greek word is not *eita* but *epeita*, which is essentially the same Greek word with an "*epi*" prefix. This has the effect of affixing the word "after" to the word "then", and the best translation becomes "after then", "after that", or "after that time", and thereby doesn't include the idea of right after.

Let's look at some other uses of *epeita* to get a clearer idea of its meaning:

Galatians 1:18 (NKJV) Then (epeita) after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

In this case, the word "then" involved at least three years later.

Galatians 1:21 (NKJV) Afterward (epeita) I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Paul probably went first to the main seaport, Caesarea, and sailed from there to Tarsus, his birthplace (Acts 9:30). He probably then went from Tarsus, in the region of Cilicia, to Syria. It was a while after he left Jerusalem that he got to Syria and Cilicia.

Galatians 2:1 (NKJV) Then (epeita) after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

Epeita here involves fourteen years.

1 Corinthians 15:23 (NKJV) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward (*epeita*) those who are Christ's at His coming.

Epeita here is referring to a period of forty years. The idea is: "what came at some time afterwards, after that time, not at that time."

Now look at 1 Cor 15:5-8:

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 (NKJV) and that He was seen by Cephas, then (*eita*) by the twelve. 6 After that (*epeita*) He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that (*epeita*) He was seen by James, then (*eita*) by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

We see in this passage that both *eita* and *epeita* are used. In verse 15:5, we see *eita*, indicating that the twelve (the original apostles) saw Him immediately after Peter did, the same day. In verse 15:6, *epeita* is used meaning: "after that time", because the 500 didn't see Him until later. Verse 15:7, again uses *epeita*, meaning that some time after the 500 saw him, He appeared to James. Next, the reference is that immediately after appearing to James, He appeared to all the apostles.

The point is, that the form of the word for "then" used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is not the form *eita*, meaning: "right after", but the *epeita*, meaning: "after that time."

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV) Then (after that time) 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.

What would be the point of saying "*the dead in Christ will rise first,*" if the living were to be also caught up and changed at almost the same time? Paul is saying that at the return of Christ the dead in Christ will be resurrected, after that time the living will be "caught up" with them in the clouds at their physical death.

The words "**caught up**" are the Greek word *harpazo*, it means: "to snatch away." This is where the word "rapture" comes from. But certainly being "caught up" means something different than a levitation of the physical body from earth up into the atmosphere of the sky. Remember, this being "caught up" happens some time after the second coming.

Harpazo could refer to the body being "caught up" but it could also refer to the Christian being "caught up" without the body. It is used this way in:

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (NKJV) 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 (*harpazo*) to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man; whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows; 4 how he was caught up (*harpazo*) into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul doesn't know whether the body was involved in this man's "snatching away". The body isn't necessary, then, in the *harpazo* event, or Paul wouldn't have expressed this uncertainty. We know that Paul didn't mean that living Christians would be caught up in their living, physical bodies at the second coming of Christ because this never happened. Christians were still around on the earth after the second coming, as history plainly tells us.

In the book, *BEFORE JERUSALEM FELL: Dating the Book of Revelation -- An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a Pre-A.D. 70 Composition* by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D., evidence is given that John was seen by Polycarp in the 90s. So, some twenty years after the parousia, John was still around.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV) 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.

Paul says that those who were alive at the second coming will **later be caught up together** with the dead who were raised, to meet the Lord in the air.

You might ask, "What does the Bible mean when it says that we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air?" Does this mean we'll be physically sucked up into the sky? What does the word "**air**" mean? Is it in our atmosphere or the air we breathe? I think that Ephesians chapter 2 gives us an idea of what air means here.

Eph 2:2: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the AIR, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

The word "**air**" is another word for heavenly or spiritual realm. Satan was always an opponent of the scheme of redemption, as we can see throughout the Bible. He **was** the prince of the power of the air. In Rom. 16:20, Paul says that Satan would be crushed "shortly" under **their** feet (remember original relevance). Jesus now has taken over that sphere and rules in the "air" with the saints since the destruction of Jerusalem. If that is the same "air" where the saints were to meet, then there is no necessity for us to believe that the rapture was to be in the physical realm.

Paul believed that the Lord would return in his lifetime. He preached strongly about the second coming, the resurrection, and judgment, but he never spoke of a physical "rapture" for living Christians.

It is not the physical body that is raptured. It is the Christian himself who is raptured as he leaves his body behind at physical death and moves into the spiritual realm. The dead believers were resurrected when Christ returned, and all other Christians would be caught up at their physical death.

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NKJV) For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

The rapture takes place at death, when we leave our earthly house and move into our spiritual house.

In looking at the related passages of what immediately followed the parousia, we find the phrases: "*Gather the elect from the four winds*" in Matt. 24:31; "*Each in his own turn*" in 1 Cor. 15:23; "*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*" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17; and "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on*" in Rev. 14:13. These are all equivalent, and are all applicable for us today. The process of being "snatched" or "caught away from" death and Hades and being "gathered in" straight to heaven began in A.D. 70. The "rapture" deals with a passage to the heavenly realm. All believers are all snatched away when they die. Revelation 11:18 is clear in showing an ongoing condition in the new age that began at A.D. 70 "*blessed are the dead who die in the Lord **from now on.***" This gathering began with the consummation of the kingdom, after the resurrection of the dead saints out of Hades, and continues throughout this age.

The idea of a "**physical rapture**" is nowhere to be found in the Bible, neither is it taught there. There is no Scriptural support for it. This escapist philosophy is pure fiction. We are not taught to escape reality in the Scripture, but rather to face it knowing that God will work all things out for our good (Romans 8:28-30).

The writer of Hebrews wrote:

Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV) And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

We won't escape physical death, we all have an appointment with it. But when we do die physically, we are "raptured" into the heavenly realm, "*And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*"

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NKJV) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Our hope is not to be snatched physically off the face of the earth prior to our death. Our hope is that when we do die physically, we will be "raptured" into the heavenly realm to forever dwell in the presence of the Lord. "**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**"

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on August 15, 1999
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