

10-10-10

Series: The Resurrections

The Resurrections (25)

What Happens to Christians Who Die?

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

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from 10-03-10)

The Doctrine of the Resurrections

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

The Thessalonians' *ignorance about the Rapture* caused them to grieve. It was to give them hope and to comfort them that Paul discussed that momentous event, giving a fourfold description of it: **1) its pillars, 2) participants, 3) plan, and 4) profit.**

So far we have looked at: 1) The Pillars of the Rapture: 1. The Death of Christ, **2.** The Resurrection of Christ, and **3.** The Revelation of Christ. **2) The Participants of the Rapture. 3) The Plan of the rapture.** Now let us look at **4) The Profit of the Rapture.**

3) The Plan of the Rapture

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” believers “will be changed” ([1 Corinthians 15:52](#)), rescued from the grasp of Satan, the fallen flesh, the evil world system, and the coming wrath of God.

[1 Corinthians 15:52 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵² **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**

The following arguments present a strong case in favor of the **pre-tribulation Rapture.**

First, the earthly kingdom of Christ promised in [Revelation 6-18](#) does not mention the church as being on earth.

Second, [Revelation 19](#) does not mention a Rapture even though that is where a **post-tribulation Rapture** (if true) would logically occur.

Third, a **post-tribulation Rapture** renders the Rapture concept itself inconsequential.

Fourth, if God **raptures** and **glorifies** all believers just prior to the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (as a **post-tribulation Rapture** demands), no one would be left to populate and propagate the earthly kingdom of Christ promised to Israel.

Fifth, the New Testament does not warn of an impending tribulation, such as is experienced during Daniel's seventieth week, for church-age believers.

Sixth, Paul's instructions here to the Thessalonians demand a **pre-tribulation Rapture** because, if Paul were teaching them **post-tribulationism**, one would expect them to rejoice that loved ones were home with the Lord and spared the horrors of the Tribulation. But, in actuality, the Thessalonians grieved.

10-10-10

Series: The Resurrections

Seventh, the sequence of events at Christ's coming following the Tribulation demands a **pre-tribulational Rapture**.

Eighth, certain of Jesus' teachings demand a **pre-tribulational Rapture**.

Ninth, [Revelation 3:10](#) teaches that the Lord will remove the church prior to the Tribulation. In the Greek, the phrase "**I also will keep you from**" can mean nothing other than "**I will prevent you from entering into.**" Jesus Christ will honor the church by preventing it from entering the hour of testing, namely Daniel's seventieth week, which is about to come upon the entire world. Only a pre-tribulational Rapture can explain how this will happen.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NASB)

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.**

Thus, the **Rapture (being caught up)** must be pre-tribulational, before the wrath of God described in the Tribulation ([Revelation 6-19](#)). At the **Rapture**, living believers will be caught up together with the believers raised from the dead as the **church triumphant joins the church militant to become the church glorified**.

Clouds are often associated in Scripture with divine appearances.

When God appeared at Mount Sinai, "**The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days**" ([Exodus 24:16](#)).

Clouds marked God's presence in the tabernacle ([Exodus 40:34](#)),

Clouds marked God's presence in the temple ([1 Kings 8:10](#)), and

Clouds marked God's presence at Christ's transfiguration ([Matthew 17:5](#)).

At His ascension Christ "**was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight**" ([Acts 1:9](#)).

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NASB)

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.**

Some argue that the word **meet** suggests meeting a dignitary, king, or famous person and escorting him back to his city. They then argue that after the meeting described in this passage, believers will return to earth with Christ. But such an analogy is arbitrary and assumes a technical meaning for the word **meet** not required by either the word or the context. As noted earlier in this teaching, that explanation also renders the **Rapture** pointless; why have believers **meet** Christ **in the air** and immediately return to earth? Why should they not just meet Him when He gets here? **Gleason L. Archer** comments, "The most that can be said of such a '**Rapture**' is that it is a rather secondary sideshow of minimal importance"

(**Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard Reiter, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 215).**

As was also noted earlier in this teaching, a post-tribulational Rapture contradicts the teaching of Christ in [John 14:1-3](#) that He will return to take believers to heaven, not immediately back to earth.

10-10-10

Series: The Resurrections

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NASB)

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.

The final step in the **plan of the Rapture** is the blessed, comforting truth that after Christ returns to gather us (believers) to Himself, **we shall always be with the Lord.**

4) The Profit of the Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The benefit of understanding the **Rapture** is not to fill the gaps in one's eschatological scheme. As noted at the beginning of this teaching, Paul's goal in teaching the Thessalonians about the **Rapture** was to **comfort** them.

The "**God of all comfort**" (**2 Corinthians 1:3**) grants to all believers the encouraging comfort of knowing that Christ will one day return for them.

2 Corinthians 1:3 (NASB)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

At that monumental event, the dead in Christ will be raised, join with the living saints in experiencing a complete transformation of body and soul, and be with God forever.

Therefore, there was no need for the Thessalonians to grieve or sorrow over their fellow believers who had died.

No wonder Paul calls the return of Christ "**the blessed hope**" (**Titus 2:13**).

Titus 2:13 (NASB)

¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.