

Rapture

It is important to note at the outset of this topic that RAPTURE is not a Biblical word. Nevertheless, it is a term adopted by a segment of Christianity to denote its belief that at a specific time faithful Christians suddenly will disappear from the earth. We do not find the teachings promoted under this term to be Scripturally supported.

Perhaps the text most misused in regard to “rapture” is I Thessalonians 4 and 5. A look at some of the details of the passage will be helpful.

The Thessalonian church had been the recipient of much persecution, including death. Paul wanted to comfort them and to explain the glorious time of the first resurrection.

In 4:13 he says (paraphrasing), “Those who have died are as if they are asleep. They are without consciousness, awaiting the day of Christ. We do sorrow for their loss, but our sorrow is not like the sorrow of those who do not share the kind of hope we have.

4:14: Even as Jesus rose a glorious spirit being after his time in the grave, even we (his faithful disciples) who die and wait in the grave will rise when it is God’s time for Jesus’ second advent.

4:15: But when Jesus returns, a good many of us (his church) will yet be alive. Those of us then living will not go to heaven before those who have waited in the grave.

4:16: The sequence of events at that time will be thus: Jesus will return (secretly and invisibly) during a time when the world will be in a clamor. He will (behind the scenes) be functioning on behalf of Israel (Daniel 12:1) as Michael, the Archangel. He also will be directing the message to the living church symbolically known as the seventh or last trumpet. (Revelation 11:15-19; I Corinthians 15:49-52) At the beginning of these events, those disciples who have died will be raised in glory to be with him. (John 14:1-3; I John 3:2)

4:17: Then, during the time of these events, “from henceforth,” (Revelation 14:13), all

of us who are yet alive will be taken one by one as we die to be together with our Lord and the risen saints. It still will be during the time in which society is undergoing its troubles. Clouds are symbolic of these stormy days. (Matthew 24:21, 22) But we will be rescued through our deaths and changed to be part of the power of spiritual control (air) and forever be with our Lord.

4:18: This is comforting!” Paul had nothing spectacular in mind. He was concisely explaining the events of our day—no magical, sudden, disappearances of Christians with their cars crashing, airplanes without pilots, or any of the other fictitious scenarios presented to us.

[Return to Doctrinal Kernels Index](#)

Frequently adherents of the rapture scenarios also rely on a twisted version of the chronology presented in Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel's prophecy is treated in satisfying and reasonable detail in Volume 3 of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, available through this website. (See **Available Literature** link.) The rapture concepts usually are also tied to prophecies concerning the "Man of Sin." This prophetic character is treated in this website. Please read the entry.

When Paul continues in I Thessalonians 5, he makes a few more points worth considering. In 5:2 he explains the secret nature of the beginning years of Jesus' second advent. Just as a thief doesn't want his presence detected, so Jesus also begins his "day" undetected. The world goes on eating, drinking, marrying, (Luke 17:26-30), unaware that it is "the days of the Son of man." Paul likens the troubles of this day (I Thessalonians 5:3) "as travail upon a woman with child." This comes in spasms ever increasing in frequency and magnitude. It is during these spasmodic times that the final living members of the church are glorified as they die. As the Revelator clearly shows, it is over a period of time, gradually: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord FROM HENCEFORTH..." (Revelation 14:13) They end their lives of LABOR, but their works for the Lord continue as they are "changed." They need not wait in the grave, as their predecessors did, but are "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"—they shall "not sleep." (I Corinthians 15:51-54) Thus the Scriptural "rapture" of those who "are alive and remain into the presence (Greek = PAROUSIA) of the Lord" really is a slow rapture taking decades to accomplish.