

Rapture of the Church

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-17

Introduction

The rapture provides comfort and hope to believers for this life and for the life to come. In 1 Thes. 4, the author addresses those who were worried about what was going to happen to their loved ones who had died. This passage of scripture was written to comfort them by deepening their understanding of the rapture. On that great day, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven to come for His people who have believed in Him. Thus, the rapture is for believers only.

When He comes, the dead in Christ will rise first; He is going to resurrect the dead, and they will gain glorified bodies. Then the believers, who are still alive when Jesus comes, will be caught up at the resurrection and receive reconstructed bodies to replace their physical ones. They will then have a perfected glorified body as Christ does.

Both the living and those who were dead (bodily) in Christ will be reunited with the Lord to be with Him forever. All who believe in Him will never have to be separated from Him or their believing loved ones again!

The comforting knowledge of the return of Christ, the resurrection of those who have died in Christ, as well as our reunion with Him, should solicit a present day response among believers. God's children should cheerfully anticipate the coming of Christ and live in such a way that looks forward to that day. 1 Corinthians 15: 58 says we should "be steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that our labor is not in vain." Believers should be committed to being faithful and growing in holiness. Once you know that you have received the gift of salvation, it should move you to live a life committed to serving the Lord, knowing that this world is not all there is for God has a future plan for us. One day, we will be changed in a moment, and changed forever to be with Him.

Getting Started

1. Does being with the Lord forever sound exciting to you? Why or why not?
2. Is it difficult for you to walk in full faith and confidence regarding the coming of Christ and the rapture? Why or why not?

Let's Get Personal

1. We learned there will be a great time of reunion among the saints upon the rapture. We also know that only those who have died in Christ or are living in Christ at the time will enjoy this experience. How does that affect your view of your lost friends and relatives? What can you do now to help point them to Christ?
2. A popular song, "I Can Only Imagine," repeats these words: *"Surrounded by your glory what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still?"* We learned that we will be caught up to be with Christ and never separated from Him again. Imagine what you may do. Imagine the freedom that your glorified body will give you. Imagine the feeling of being in the eternal presence of our Lord forever.
3. How does the information you received in this week's sermon impact your mind and heart when you think of loved ones who have passed away?

Take the Next Step

1. How does the truth of the rapture impact your thoughts as you reflect on how you live your life now?
2. Does the reality of a "reckoning with Christ" impact your thoughts regarding your personal witness – actions and words – and the unsaved around you? If you really believe one day Jesus is coming back again, who will you tell now about the hope available to them in Christ?
3. Do you want to dig deeper? Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 58, John 14:1-3, 1 John 3:2-3, 2 Corinthians 5:8, or Philippians 1:21.

Renew Your Mind

"...for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:52