

The Rapture

Taking a Second Look at the Second Coming

by

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Chapter 1

TRUTH OR ERROR ?

Many Christians today are becoming increasingly concerned about the truth of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the past generation and particularly in the last 20 years, there has been theory after theory put before God's people until there are too many beliefs to name. We have heard labels such as pre-tribulation theory, post tribulation theory, premillennialism and postmillennialism thrown around so loosely until the average Christian doesn't know who or what to believe.

Most of this controversy surrounds one particular concept of the coming of the Lord that has become more popular than any other. Among born-again believers, it is the most widely accepted viewpoint concerning the truth of the second coming of the Lord. This theory centers around an event, which is called the "*Rapture of the Church.*" We see bumper stickers on the back of cars reading such things as "In Case of Rapture This Car Will Be Driverless;" and you can find books by the hundreds written on this subject in any Christian Bookstore and even in such unlikely places as the local supermarket.

One thing we can see by the popularity of this subject is a genuine spirit of anticipation that is stirring in the hearts of Christians everywhere. We are all looking forward to something new from God and we are looking for it to happen soon. This is actually the very Spirit of God working in His Creation preparing us for the next step the Church is going to take in God.

Everywhere I go people sincerely want to know one thing - "What does the scripture say about the coming of the Lord?" They have heard enough theories and thoughts and ideas, now they want to know what the Bible says concerning this end- time period we are fast approaching. Is the "Rapture Theory" scriptural truth or mythical error?

What is the Rapture Theory?

In essence, the rapture theory declares that at the appointed time of God, the archangel will blow a trumpet and the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven and appear in the sky. All the graves will open and those who have died, being born again Christians, will rise up out of them and begin to ascend into the clouds. Then all the Christians who are alive at that time shall follow them up into the sky, to meet the Lord in the air.

There are also many ideas, about the *rapture theory* itself, such as: Where will the saints go after they rise to meet the Lord and how long will they be gone? These questions will not be of particular concern to us in this booklet. Rather! Is it truth or error: that the Church of Jesus Christ will literally and physically be removed from this earth at the time of the Lord's coming?

He is Coming!

All Christians agree that there is something yet in the future for the church to experience. And we all agree that this experience surrounds and is directly related to the coming of our Lord Jesus. His personal return to this earth is something that is very precious to every saint and is something that is looked forward to with great joy by each of us. This hope that we all share is not to be doubted in any measure; for that day will surely come as God has spoken in His Word.

The Bible clearly teaches a coming again to this earth of Jesus Christ and all the saints, (I Thess. 3:13). It clearly teaches a catching up, a resurrection, a quickening, and a meeting of all the departed saints and the Lord with the Church still alive on the earth at the time of His coming. None of these things are in question at all. What is in question and what does need our study and attention is the ORDER of His coming. In what manner does the catching up take place? The Rapture Theory teaches the saints will literally and physically be taken off this earth at the return of Jesus Christ and taken out in the Universe somewhere to a place called Heaven. Is this fact or fiction?

Not in the Bible!

First let me say this, the word *Rapture* is not found anywhere in the Bible, but there are scriptures that many Christians feel imply such an event will happen or they would have no reason to believe it in the first place. No one is foolish enough to believe something is Truth unless they have scriptures on which to base their belief. It is these scriptures, the ones that are considered to be *rapture scriptures* that I want to deal with in this booklet.

Chapter 2

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY?

Turn with me in your Bible to I Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is the main passage of scripture that is used by those who teach the *rapture*. This is the very one they will direct you to as absolute proof that at the sound of a trumpet, Jesus will appear on a cloud in the sky and catch His waiting church away. Let us take this passage and break it down verse by verse and see what it is actually talking about.

Here, Paul is exhorting those Christians at Thessalonica not to grieve over their loved ones who have gone on to be with the Lord. Go with me in your mind to that time period in which Paul was writing. At that particular moment in church history, the saints expected the return of the Lord to take place at any minute and many Christians feared that their loved ones, who had already fallen asleep, would miss this glorious event of His Coming. Paul is comforting them by this: (I Thess. 4:13-18).

13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual Things

The Bible is a spiritual book! The spiritual things of God are written in it and God did not leave us void of His Spirit so that we might know what He is talking about! I Cor. 2:12- 14 says.... *”Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

For too long we have tried to interpret these scriptures concerning the Lord's return by the natural mind of man and we are completely missing what the Holy Ghost is ministering to us

through the writings of the Apostles. I pray that you will allow me to compare some spiritual things with a spiritual order for you here in this 4th Chapter of I Thessalonians.

Three Different Groups

There are three different and distinct categories of people here in this 4th Chapter of 1st Thessalonians. The key to understanding this is recognizing the difference between the *Dead in Christ* group and those who have *fallen asleep* in the Lord. Traditionally these two have always been referred to as the same group, but as we study these two groups in the scriptures we are going to find that the Bible never refers to the *dead in Christ* as being asleep and it never refers to Christians who are *asleep* as being dead in Christ! Praise the Lord, there is a difference! Paul is definitely speaking of 3 different categories of people here; (1.) **the asleep in Jesus**, (2.) **the dead in Christ**, and (3.) **the alive and remain**.

Please keep in mind as we study these categories of people here, that Paul has separated them only for the purpose of helping us understand the order of the Lord's coming. The Body of Christ, which is the Church of Jesus Christ, has never been separated. While Paul is not physically present with us here on earth, he is still a member of the Body of Christ. So we are going to separate and define these three categories, but the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is one company.

Chapter 3

THE "ASLEEP IN JESUS"

Who are the *asleep in Jesus*? First we have to understand what the Bible is talking about when it says sleep. There are two kinds of sleep that the scriptures teach us about. There is *the sleep* in 1st Corinthians 15:17 & 18 and *the sleep* in Ephesians 5:14. 1st Corinthians is dealing with those who have layed their bodies down, they have departed this life or as we commonly say it, they have gone on to be with the Lord, like my grandmother, my brother etc. The Bible does not refer to them as dead; it says they are *asleep in Jesus* (or in Christ).

But Ephesians 5:14 is a different sleep. It is dealing with those who still have the sleep upon their understanding of God because of sin. That is a kind of sleep also, but they are people still walking around here on earth. 1 Cor. 15:34 says they must "*Awake to righteousness and sin not.*"

1st Corinthians 15:17 reads...."*And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*" This is speaking of all the saints of God who have departed from this life, whose faith and trust was in the Lord. They have accepted the Lord in their lifetime, trusted in Him and have departed this life to be with the Lord. Nowhere does the scripture teach they are dead. It always says in referring to those believers who have departed this world by way of the grave, that they have *fallen asleep*.

Sleep is Rest

The English word *sleep* does not really give a very good impression of what condition the departed saints are in. When we say *sleep* we think of someone snoring in a bed, but that is not a good description of what they are doing. What it actually means is *rest*. They have ceased from their labors and have entered into His rest. The saints on the other side (or the asleep) are not laboring against sin. They don't have to fight the devil all the time! They have entered into His rest. If there is any kind of activity on the other side, it sure isn't the saints having trouble with cursing, smoking, drinking, or committing sin of any kind. Neither are they suffering persecution of any kind. They have entered into His rest, or I could say it like this, they are resting in the plan of God. They have fought a good fight while here on earth, they have kept the faith, now they are resting in the plan of God, or they rest assured that they have a place prepared for them in the Kingdom. Job said, "*all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*" (Job14:4) They are no longer active in the war against Satan in themselves.

" Lazarus Sleepeth"

Jesus had a hard time getting his disciples to understand when a believer departs this life he is only *asleep*. In St. John 11:11, when Jesus was about to return to Bethany because Lazarus was sick, He said to his disciples... "*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*" The disciples immediately thought Lazarus was doing well since Jesus said he was

asleep but the Lord then had to tell them plainly...Lazarus is dead. We may have to speak plainly sometimes in referring to a brother or sister as being dead but to be scripturally correct we should say, he or she has *fallen asleep* in the Lord.

Jesus Gave Us Life

There is a very good reason the scriptures do not refer to the departed saints as being dead. Jesus came that we might have life and that more abundantly! 1st John 5:12 states.... "*He that hath the Son hath life.*" It doesn't say, he that hath the Son will someday up in heaven have life, but it says he hath it NOW. You have eternal life, or, you will be eternally conscious that you exist. You may lay your body down tomorrow but we know... "*That if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.... and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.*" Do you think the Lord is dead? Of course not! The scriptures teach he arose from the dead never to die anymore! So the saints of God do not die when they depart this world, they fall asleep (or take their rest) in the Lord.

Awake Thou That Sleepest

As I said earlier, the Bible speaks of two different kinds of sleep. I have just described one of them to you. Now, let me deal with the other one briefly before we go back to our text in 1st Thessalonians 4:13 and sum up the *asleep in Jesus*.

Ephesians 5:14 says...."*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*" Now Paul was not speaking this out in a cemetery, he was talking to live people and all of them sat right in his presence as he preached. He was talking about people that are living in death (sin) while they are walking around on earth. Those he calls *asleep* and *dead*. They have a sleep upon them that causes them to be unfruitful in the things of God. Just as departed saints are resting in the Plan of God, these are at ease in their ignorance of God. They are dead, insensible and numb to the things of God but they are walking around right here on this earth. Paul declares "*awake unto righteousness and sin not.*" They are considered *asleep* (or dead) in that condition by the Word of God. But these are not the same as the ones who are *asleep in Jesus* in 1st Thess. 4:13. The *asleep* that Paul is talking about, the ones we should not sorrow over, are those who have departed this life as believers and are with the Lord

Now let's sum up what we have learned about the *asleep in Jesus* category. They are the saints of God who have laid their bodies down and gone on to be with the Lord. They are alive in the presence of the Lord right now. Not only do we know where they are but the scripture goes on to tell us how they shall return to earth.... "*them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*" When the Lord returns to this earth he will bring those who have departed this life with him. They are the *asleep in Jesus*.

Chapter 4

THE DEAD IN CHRIST

Since the scripture here in Thessalonians does not teach that the departed saints are dead, but only asleep, then who are the ***dead in Christ***? They are those who have reckoned themselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:11) They are dead to sin, dead to the Adam nature, dead to the world, dead to the carnal mind, meaning they are no longer partakers in any of these. They are pressing on in God and growing in the knowledge of the Son of God. They rise first every time! They rise in the knowledge of God every time His Spirit enlightens them. Paul spoke to us of this in the third chapter of Philippians; let me quote to you the 11th verse out of the amplified Bible.... "*that if possible I may attain to the (spiritual and moral) resurrection (that lifts me) out from among the dead (even while in the body).*" Paul looked for the resurrection from the dead while he was walking around right here on earth!

The natural mind automatically thinks of the cemetery when you say the word ***dead***. Just like there are two different kinds of sleep spoken of in the Bible, there are also two different kinds of dead. You can be "dead in sin and trespasses" and you can be "dead in Christ." They are exact opposites, but they are both talking about people who are alive and walking around on this earth. We must understand this so that we can see when he spoke to us in 1st Thessalonians of some who were ***dead in Christ*** (that were going to rise first) he was not speaking of the cemetery dead.

Firstfruit Company

The ***dead in Christ*** is a Firstfruit Company of saints that is coming forth. Every time God is dealing with man from Genesis to Revelation there is always a firstfruit company. The ***dead in Christ*** are a kind of firstfruits of his creatures, an overcoming group, the Sons of God, the 144,000 that shall stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, His body, the Church! This is a company, a ministry that God has chosen and they have chosen to go all the way with God by putting off the old life of sin and putting on the new life of Christ. If the ***dead in Christ*** are not the Overcomers who are being changed while here on earth - if they are, as we were taught in times past, the same as the ***asleep in Jesus*** then we cannot be changed until Jesus returns with all the saints. We might as well hope for a rapture!

Paul said in 1st Cor. 15:22,23... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. The ***dead in Christ*** Company shall rise first to the world; they shall be the first manifestation to the world that Jesus Christ is alive in his corporate Body.

Rise Up - Not Float Up

Paul says the dead in Christ shall rise first. They shall "rise" and they shall be the "first" to do so. What does this mean *to rise*? The old rapture theory has taught us that this means all those Christians who have physically died are going to come out of their graves and rise into the sky. But this word *rise*, which is "anistemi" in the Greek, actually means *to stand up*, not float up! It means to raise up again, rise, to stand upright. What it really means is God is going to bring forth a people that will stand upright in righteousness and be the fruit of his offspring, the manifestation of the sons of God who are just like Jesus.

Where Did We Fall From?

To really understand where we are rising up to, we shall have to understand where we have fallen from. Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "*Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*" Man has fallen from the place God created for him to abide in. He appointed him a place as gardener, or guardian, in the garden of God and made a covenant of life with him. God said.... "*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

What if Adam hadn't eaten of that tree; he would have lived forever, wouldn't he? Had Adam obeyed God, he would not have died and sin would not have entered the world. He was to establish righteousness in the earth, but he fell. The root meaning of this Greek word for "rise" and "raise" means: abide, appoint, covenant, establish or simply, "to stand." It does not mean rise up into the sky!

Now Jesus used this same word "anistemi" that we have been talking about here when he said.... Of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (St John 6:39,40) This is the same word used for *rise* in 1st Thess. 4:16..."the dead in Christ shall rise first." It means to be reinstated in the uprightness of God that was in the beginning.

The *dead in Christ* group are going to be the first to rise up and meet the Lord, to meet his conditions, to meet his commandments in their daily life. God is beginning to develop men and women everywhere into a state of maturity in Him that people are going to see. They shall be the first evidence to the world that God has completed a work in a people. Many shall come to them to hear the Word of God. It will be the pure and undefiled Word of God because their lives have been changed by Him. They have been "raised up" by Him! The Word of God they shall speak will change the lives of all who will hear and cause them to be raised up also, caught up in the clouds, caught up in the same environment by that same spirit of understanding.

Chapter 5

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

There is one question that this passage of scripture in 1st Thess. Chapter 4 raises that we must find the answer to before we can ever unravel the real meaning behind Paul's declaration of the order of the Lord's coming. The question is -Where are we going?

This text definitely indicates we are going somewhere. It says the *dead in Christ* rise first. It says the *alive and remain* shall be "*caught up together with them in the clouds,*" and it says the *alive and remain* will not go ahead of those who are *asleep*. Go ahead to where? Rise first to where? Get caught up to where? Traditionally we have never thought any more about it than to say we are going up into the sky or we are going up to heaven.

It's easy to understand when we say "Adam fell" or the "Fall of Adam" "that we do not mean he literally fell out of a tree or he literally fell off a building. The fall was in his character, his nature, and his relationship with God. He fell from obedience into disobedience. By the same measure, rising up or getting "caught up" does not mean we have to literally leave the earth. It means He is going to raise us up above the realm of the fallen Adam. Adam fell from the realm of life into the realm of death. Jesus came into the realm of death and "*destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil*" (Heb. 2:14) ... and is raising His body, the Church, to immortality; and "*fashioning it like unto his glorious body*". . "*Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*" (I Cor. 15:54)

The Realm of Immortality

That is where the creation of God is going, that is what we are rising up to, that is what we are headed for, Immortality! If you believe you are going to be with the Lord, then tell me where is the Lord at, according to the scriptures? 1st Timothy 6:15, 16 says... "*which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*" I want you to know that no man (Adamkind) can approach unto this, that is why he must die to his first nature, the Adam nature. But, "*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*" If you will put off the old man and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will be one with him, Praise God, and He is dwelling in the light of immortality. THERE IS NO DEATH IN THE PLACE WHERE HE IS DWELLING!!

Chapter 6

THE TIME ELEMENT OF GOD

Paul told Timothy in 11 Timothy 1:10... "*Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*" Well, you might say, why don't we see anybody with immortality, why is there still death all around us? We have need to understand the time element of God.

One Day with the Lord is as a Thousand Years

Peter gave us a real key to understanding Bible Prophecy when he told us... "*Beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" (11 Pet. 3:8) It has been approximately 2,000 years since Jesus walked the shores of Galilee. That is **two days** of time as God counts time. This means, the Church is about to enter the third (thousand year) day of time, in history, since Jesus' earthen ministry ended.

He said.... "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up... But he spake of the temple of his body.*" (St. John 2:19) In the first essence, he spoke of his own physical body but the deepest meaning of his declaration reaches clear out here to us. It encompasses the entire Body of Christ. He said **in three days** he would raise it up, speaking of the temple of his body. What is the temple of his body? 1 Cor. 12:27 says... "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*" Glory to God, He said in three days He would raise it up! We see we are just about to enter the third millennium or the third day from the Cross. So we see the time is at hand for His Body, the Church to **raise up**.

As Jesus' body came out of the earthen tomb on the third 24 hour day, so is His corporate body, the body of Christ coming out of death on this third one thousand year day. When I say "death" here, I mean death in its fullest and farthest-reaching consequences. We have had soul life in Jesus for two thousand years. If you lay your body down tomorrow, you will move out of this realm a live soul and you will be present with the Lord. But the time is coming, and now is, when even physical death shall be abolished. Paul said... "*even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" (Rom. 8:23) Paul looked for the redemption of the body back in his time but the time for immortality was not yet. But now the time is ready! All systems are go! There is a spirit of anticipation stirring in the hearts of Christians everywhere. The grave clothes are coming off and the Body of Christ is rising up! Praise the Lord!

After Six Days

We have another type of the time element of God found in Matthew 17: 1 "*...and after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.*" Historically, it has been 6,000 years since Adam in the garden. That is **six days** of time in God. We are living right now in the closing of the sixth day of time since Adam. What

did Jesus do after six days? “*He taketh Peter, James and John and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.*” He is bringing the church of the Living God, the Body of Christ, the Overcomer, the one that is dying out to self and alive to Him and listening solely to Him and the Holy Ghost, He is bringing them up into a high mountain. Not up *on* a mountain, but *into* a mountaintop experience with Him where He said, in the tops of the mountains my people will abide! Isaiah 2:2 reads, “*And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it.*” The house of God will be established in the top of the mountains; it will be established in the mountaintop experience the Lord is taking the Church into this hour.

What happened in the top of this mountain? Jesus “...*was transfigured before their very eyes and a bright cloud overshadowed them.*” (Matt. 17:5) Now Jesus is taking the body of Christ up into a mountaintop experience with him and they shall be changed, transfigured, into his likeness and image. Praise His Name!

Chapter 7

WE SHALL BE CHANGED

The message of God in this hour is "*Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep (or die) but we shall all be changed...*" (1 Cor. 15:51) Up until now, the saints have been falling **asleep** in the Lord, but now it is the time for the change. We shall not all sleep (or die) but we shall all be changed. There must be a change, this mortal body is not suited for heavenly conditions, neither shall it last through eternity. The **dead in Christ** are going to rise first into this change, they are being brought by the Lord up into this mountaintop experience and they shall be changed first. That is what the scripture declares... "*the dead in Christ shall rise first.*"

Paul said "*Behold I shew you a mystery*" **not** "*I keep it a mystery,*" but, he has **showed** us a mystery. He wants the church to see and understand this change that God is bringing about in our lives in this last day. This word "mystery" here is "mysterion" in the Greek, and it means "Sacred secret". The change that God is bringing about in the lives of Christians today is very sacred and it is very much a mystery to the religious mind and to the world.

During The Last Trump

"Behold I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" ...**WHEN?**... "*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.*" The Emphasized Bible says,... "*During the last trump.*" The "trump of God" is the message of God to His Church. You shall be changed as you hear and adhere to this last message, this last trump of God that is coming forth in this hour.

Let me ask you, what message could come after - we shall not all sleep (or die)? What message could come after - this mortal **must put on** immortality? The last enemy to be destroyed is death. That is the **last** enemy. "*For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*" (1 Cor. 15:25,26) The kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father then... "*God may be all and in all.*" Glory to God!

When shall this change happen? "*During the last trumpet: for it shall sound, and (the dead) shall be raised (incorruptible) and (we) shall be changed. For this corruptible (must needs) clothe itself (with incorruptibility) and this mortal, clothe itself (with immortality),*" 1 Cor. 15:52,53 The Emphasized Bible. If this mortal must clothe itself with immortality then it means someone is going to be changed while walking around right here on this earth. Praise the Lord - the **dead in Christ** shall rise first!!

Israel's Three Annual Feasts

As we study the three annual Feasts of Israel, we will see plainly where the Church is headed. Passover is the type of the salvation where the blood is applied. The Feast of Pentecost is

the shedding forth of the Spirit of God or the Holy Ghost experience here on the earth. The Feast of Tabernacles is the type of body redemption where **this body** puts on immortality.

The Feast of Tabernacles was held at the time of Ingathering, the time of the full harvest. Jesus said...."*except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*". (St. John 12:24) Jesus was that corn of wheat that died and is now bringing forth much fruit. This is harvest time. This is the time for His Body, the church, to come forth in His likeness and image, and He has a changed body! That is what the Church shall come forth in, a changed body!

We have had the fulfillment of both feasts right here on the earth. Passover, we know, is soul salvation experience. The Feast of Pentecost is the infilling of the Holy Spirit; but everybody wants the third feast to be fulfilled somewhere over in heaven. The other two were fulfilled right here in the Church and I declare unto you by the Word of God that the third feast will be fulfilled right here in the earth in the Church also. The Church shall experience the redemption of their physical body, which is **the change** from mortal to immortality.

"I Go To Prepare a Place For You"

The question we asked was, Where are we going? The **dead in Christ** shall rise first. Rise to what? The **alive and remain** shall be caught up. Caught up to what? Jesus said..."*I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go.... I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.*" (St. John 14:3) The place the body of Christ is being caught up, or rising up to, is this change to immortality (a glorified body), a state of deathlessness, Praise God! He said that **where I am**, you may be also - well, where is the Lord? He is dwelling in the light of immortality and He has prepared a place **there** for us also, His Church, ...and He is receiving us unto himself!

How? In what order is He receiving us unto Himself? The **dead in Christ** rise in this order first. Those who have died out to self shall receive this change from mortal to immortality first. Then we have the **asleep in Jesus**, the scripture says, "*God shall bring them with him*". When the **dead in Christ** rise to meet the Lord, or when they have obtained this place of the High Calling of God, those who have **fallen asleep** shall appear in this same place with them. Together they shall appear to the world as a full manifestation of His Corporate Son. And **THEN**, after this, the order is for the **alive and remain** to be "caught up". They shall be caught up by this revival God shall pour out through His Sons at this time. They shall be "*caught up together with them in the clouds (to this same place) to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*"

"Caught Up Together With Them In The Clouds"

The **alive and remain** shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (clouds of witnesses). Do you see that there are already some in the clouds before the **alive and remain** are caught up. Some have already entered this realm of glory before the catching up of the **alive and remain** into this change to immortality.

The *alive and remain* shall not prevent those who are *asleep* either. This means the *alive and remain* shall not go ahead into immortality, or they shall not receive their changed body before those who have fallen *asleep in Jesus*. So we see this cloud is made up those who are *asleep in Jesus* and who are *dead in Christ*; and when this great cloud of witnesses comes forth then the *alive and remain* shall see the glory of the Lord and shall be seized, caught up together with them (the cloud of witnesses) to this same place of immortality.

Chapter 8

THE "ALIVE AND REMAIN"

We have already said a lot of things about our last category the *alive and remain*, but let's take a look at them now in greater depth. Who are the *alive and remain*? Our text of scripture here in 1 Thess. says they are those who are "caught up". It will help us to understand who they are if we will understand what it means to be "caught up".

The old Rapture theory teaches that gravity will lose its hold and the *alive and remain* will float up to meet the Lord in the sky. The Greek word for "caught up" is "harpazo"; it means: to seize - catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take by force. It is a derivation of the word "haireomai" meaning to take for oneself, to prefer, to choose.

Caught Up To Third Heaven

Paul spoke of one, in 11 Cor. 12:2, that was "caught up" to third heaven. This is the same word "harpazo" that is used in 1 Thess. 4:17. He said, "*I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*" Paul is speaking of one who was "caught up" or seized by a revelation or vision of God and heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." He was "caught up" to a revelation of God, not caught up off the earth.

Seized By The Spirit of God

When the *dead in Christ*, the Sons of God, are raised up in this last day, they shall speak words of Life that shall bring revival to this world. The *alive and remain* are those, who at that time are still remaining in man-made organizations. They shall be caught up by this revival; they are going to be seized by the Spirit of God that proceedeth out of the mouth of the *dead in Christ* company.

"Come Out of Her My People"

1 John 5:12 says..." He that hath the Son hath life;".. (or is alive) and there are many saints that are in the denominational systems and organized religions of man who have Jesus Christ in them. They are our brothers and sisters, but they are captivated by denominationalism and the schisms that separate and bar everyone who does not have their creed, and their name, and their doctrine. They do not consider anyone to be a (quote) **Christian** (unquote), unless they are a member of their denomination. Everyone else is an outsider and needs to be saved; therefore we have division among God's people.

But those who die (*the dead in Christ shall rise first*) are those who die out to all the manmade orders, all the denominational systems that are organized and brought about by man

and they live only unto Christ! We have many religious systems today claiming to be the Body of Christ. Nowhere does it say that one particular system or denomination is the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is a many membered body made up of born-again believers, but denominationalism narrows the Body of Christ down to just its members. We are to be like Jesus! We are not to be self-righteous and bar people out. Jesus came to save the sinner, the lost and the ungodly, but the denominations say, if you don't get in my denomination you are not saved, they don't say anything about getting in Christ, just get in their denomination and you'll be saved.

Now, Jesus is in those denominations working with those people, he is not working with that system. He is working with the people in those systems who love him and have accepted him as savior. They are the *alive and remain*. What is going to happen to them; where do they fit into the picture at the Lord's coming? After the *dead in Christ* and the *asleep in Jesus* are brought together as one great company, there is going to be a revival that breaks out in this next age and the *alive and remain* are going to be caught up together with them in this great cloud of witnesses. They are going to be "caught up" to meet the Lord, to meet his conditions and his commandments in their life. They are going to be "caught up" to the same realm, the same understanding, the same place in God as this great cloud of witnesses BY a revival process and an outpouring of the Holy Ghost through the Sons of God, they which are... "*alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" 1 Thess. 4:17

Chapter 9

THE "CLOUDS"

There are two more words in 1 Thess. chapter 4 that must be seen through the eyes of the Spirit in order to receive what the Holy Ghost is ministering to the Church. The two words are "clouds" and "air"...*"caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."* Let's deal with the word "clouds" first.

Clouds Are Men!

There are three passages of scripture in the New Testament where it refers to "clouds" that very plainly tell us they are men. Not just any men either. They are men in a position of ministering to God's people. In two of three passages, 11 Peter 2:10-19 and Jude :4-12, it speaks of evil ministers; then in Hebrews 12:1 it tells us of a great *cloud of witnesses*, these are God's ministers, they are witnesses unto Him. Here are three different scriptures, all are talking about ministers, and all three call them "clouds".

First we will take a look at 11 Peter 2:10-18 and allow me to quote for you the essence of this scripture.... *"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.... Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam and the Son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;... These are wells without water...."* Have you heard of a minister referred to in the Bible as a well? *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* "These are God's ministers. They cause you to drink of the Spirit of Life as they minister under the anointing of God. But here in 11 Peter 2:17 it says these are...*"Wells without water..."* they are dry, void of the Spirit of God, unable to quench your thirst for God. Going on now with this passage, let's see what they are.... *"clouds that are carried with a tempest"...* there it is, the word "clouds" but we can see it is not referring to thunderheads...it is speaking of ministers.... *"to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness those that were clean escaped from them who live in error."*

Clouds Without Water

Turn over to the book of Jude now and we will take a look at verse 4 and then skip down to verse 11 and 12. We are going to see here the same description of wicked ministers that we saw in 11 Peter 2:10.... *"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.... Woe unto them! for they have gone*

in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots". These ministers are void of the Spirit of God; and because they are void of the Spirit (or they are without water) their fruit dries up.

Cloud of Witnesses

That is the negative side of the meaning of "clouds". Now turn with me to Hebrews 12:1 and we will see the positive side. The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the faith chapter. It tells about the Old Testament men of God and their individual life of faith toward God. They were witnesses of Him. They witnessed of the power of God in their own personal lives. Paul starts out the 12th chapter like this..... *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses"....* or let me paraphrase it for you...Not only were there great men of God in times of old, but Paul was telling them, *we also*, meaning Paul and his contemporaries, are surrounded by great men of faith, a **cloud of witnesses** that witness of the power and glory of Jesus Christ in their lives. Paul was saying to them that Peter, James, John, Matthew, Mark, all of these, are a cloud of witnesses unto you Hebrews.

Paul himself was the greatest witness of all. He persecuted the church and called them blasphemers but don't you know what a witness it made him when Jesus Christ changed his life! Praise the Lord; God has always had a great cloud of witnesses in the earth. It says cloud (singular) of witnesses (plural), this cloud covering is of many people witnessing one Lord, one truth.

There is a ministry on the earth, who has totally given their lives to the Lord and has become a kind of "firstfruits of his creatures". There is always a firstfruit company. The husbandman must first be partakers of the fruit. This company shall be the first to rise to the standards of the Lord and shall minister revelation straight from the throne of God that shall cause the **alive and remain** to be caught up to the same understanding of that "cloud of witnesses", glory to God! So, I can say to you today as Paul did then .. *"wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses"...* there are many anointed ministers on the earth today that are a "cloud of witnesses" to you. They shall preach and minister the Word of God to you without fear or favor so that you might be "caught" up together with them in the "clouds", glory to God!

He Is Coming "in" and "with" Clouds

Nowhere in the Bible when it is referring to the second coming of Jesus Christ does it say He is coming **on** a cloud. Matthew 24:30 says...*"and they shall see the Son of Man coming IN the clouds of heaven."* Mark 13:26 says....*"And then shall they see the Son of Man coming IN the clouds with great power and glory."* Revelation 1:7 says *"Behold he cometh WITH clouds and every eye shall see him."* Daniel 7:13.....*"I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son*

of Man came *WITH* the clouds of heaven...." So we see His coming is **IN** and **WITH** clouds and not **ON** them.

Now let's see what else the scripture says He is coming "in" and "with" ... and then we'll see what "clouds" are! Romans 8:18 says... " *for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed **in us**.*" He is coming **in us** - He is coming **in clouds**, or I could say His coming "in clouds" is His coming "in His saints". He is coming with glory and the scripture here in Romans 8 says the glory shall be revealed **in us**.

Now turn with me to 11 Thessalonians 1:7-10 and here we will be able to see the whole picture of Him coming "with clouds" and "in clouds" in this one scripture. " *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...(he is coming with clouds)...In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"...(he is coming with power!) "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."* Praise God, He is coming **in** glory, He is coming **in** clouds, He is coming **in** His saints, he is coming **in** those that have layed down their lives at the master's feet and have become His witnesses. This is a great **cloud of witnesses**! This is a great cloud of saints who witness to the world the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:1 says, " *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses....*" Isn't it wonderful to know that God is not interested in thunderheads but He sure is interested in you being a part of the "cloud" that witnesses of Him. When the Bible speaks of a cloud or clouds there is a lot more to understand about it than a weather report. God is conveying unto us through His Word a definite thought and Oh! how important it is that we would understand what He is really saying to us instead of always picturing a white billowy cloud floating through the sky. It is more important to God for you to be a part of that "cloud of witnesses", than for Him to catch you up in a thunderhead.

"For thou art the Clouds yea, that I have brought in this hour to cover yea and be my covering saith the Lord. For I shall make of thee even that rain, yea thou shalt be the Latter Rain yea and thou shalt rain upon the thirsty, and the Life of the Christ shall come forth yea the barren shall flourish yea and the deserts they shall bloom for I have made thee even my cloud covering; and I give thee my Spirit and thou shalt rain, thou shalt be even my Latter Rain, Empty thyself, yea my clouds that be filled shall be emptied yea and they shall be poured out yea and as thy give of thyself for me shall I give of myself unto thee; and thou shall know even the beauty of mine holiness yea for thy mind is being changed and I have given unto thee a new mind and a new spirit and a new attitude and a new approach unto me and I shall come unto thee in a greater measure in this day, for as I say thou art my cloud covering and I shall reign in thee saith the Lord."

Chapter 10

"TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR"

The Rapture theory teaches the Church is going to be caught up into the sky but that is not what the Bible says. It says.... "*Caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*".... not the sky! The very substance you are breathing right now happens to be air, so you would not have to go up to get into it. As a matter of fact, you are in the air now!!

If this word "air" does not mean, "sky" then let's take a look at what it does mean. In the English language, we see the word "air" written on the pages of our King James Translation: but in the Greek language, on the scrolls, there are two words in the New Testament that are translated "air". If you have a Strongs Concordance you can look this up also. It is #109 in the Greek Dictionary Section. This is the Greek word for "air" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17: *AER, means air as naturally circumambient, from aemi (to breath unconsciously, i.e.. respire, by analogy to blow) air.* Doesn't sound too much like it means the sky now does it? It means- air, as naturally circumambient, or the surrounding, encompassing, enclosing, being on all sides or simply - the environment.

I want to quote you two other scriptures that use this Greek word **AER** on the original manuscripts but is translated "air" in the King James Version.... "*And they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.*" (Acts 22:23) Have you ever tried to throw dust into the sky? It doesn't go very far, does it? 1 Cor.9:26 says.... "*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.*" If you were going to beat the air, it would have to be within your reach, wouldn't it? So you can tell by the manner in which this word AER is used that it is speaking of something close by, which is the immediate, surrounding environment.

This word AER is used in another scripture I might make mention of right here.... Ephesians 2:2.... "*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air (AER), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*" Everybody knows that the prince of the power of the air is Satan. And we know this is not talking about him being the prince of the power of the SKY or else you would have to be riding in an airplane before he could affect your life. But this is talking about Satan being the prince of the air (AER) or the one in control of the environment of everyone who is a child of disobedience.

I want you to know that everyone who obeys not the Word of God or the will of God in their life has Satan, the prince of the air, for the god of the world they are living in. By the same measure, if you are obeying God's Word and walking in all the light that you know, and your life is committed to Jesus Christ, then you have him, the Lord of Glory, as the Prince, or God, of your world. Then Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the one who is in control of your environment.

Another Word Means "Sky"

There is a Greek word OURANOS that is translated "air" in the King James Version but actually means "sky" in the Greek. So, if Paul had really been trying to tell us we would be literally raptured off this earth into the sky to meet the Lord, why didn't he use the Greek word OURANOS in this 17th verse of 1 Thess. 4 instead of the Greek word AER. If you would like to check the word OURANOS in the Strongs Concordance, it is number #3772 in the Greek dictionary section. OURANOS, means air, sky or heaven from the word "oro" (to rise through the idea of elevation.): the sky, by extension heaven (the abode of God, by implication happiness, power eternity, specially the gospel of Christianity) Doesn't that sound more like a description of the Rapture theory? If the old Rapture theory is really the truth, why didn't Paul use the word OURANOS here? Then this scripture would imply that the church would rise (through the idea of elevation) right off the earth to meet the Lord in the sky.

Paul's Problem with the Church's Religious Background

Paul had good reason to choose his words carefully because he had a very delicate matter to handle here in 1 Thess. Chapter 4. You must consider whom he was speaking to and what he was trying to convey. At the time, he was speaking to a young church that was primarily of either a Hebrew background or a pagan idolatrous background.

Let me quote a passage here from Eerdman's The New Bible Dictionary, pg. 1086 that will give us a picture of what kind of problem Paul was facing because of the diverse religious backgrounds of the members of the church: "The Christian idea of resurrection is to be distinguished from both Greek and Jewish ideas. The Greeks thought of the body as a hindrance in true life and they looked for the time when the soul would be free from its shackles. They conceived of life after death in terms of the immortality of the soul but they firmly rejected all ideas of resurrection. The Jews were firmly persuaded of the values of the body and thought these would not be lost. They thus looked for the body to be raised. But they thought it would be exactly the same body. The Christians thought of the body as being raised but also transformed so as to be a suitable vehicle for the very different life of the age to come. The Christian idea is thus distinctive."

With this problem in mind now, we can understand why Paul worded this 4th chapter of Thessalonians the way he did. If it were true that we would someday shed this body and be spirit beings, Paul could have used another Greek word "pneuma" which is translated "wind" and "air" in English but also means "spirit". Then this passage could have meant we would be caught up to meet the Lord in the spirit and convey the pagan idolatrous thought that God is not interested in this physical body. But Paul didn't choose the word "pneuma" (spirit) in 1 Thess. 4:17, neither did he choose the word "ouranos" (sky) but he chose "aer" (air, as naturally circumambient) meaning the immediate surrounding environment. He had to use a word that would convey the thought of us rising, caught up, growing up and maturing in God in a spiritual order but doing it in our physical body, a body that will be changed right here on earth. Had he used "pneuma" it could be mistaken for "spirit" and imply we would someday be only spirit beings, having no physical substance, kind of like Casper the ghost! Had he used the word "ouranos" it would

imply leaving earth and going into the sky. So he chose the word "aer". We are going to be caught up to meet the Lord and dwell with him in the AER or, the same environment that the Lord is in. The environment the Lord is dwelling in is *immortality!* (1 Timothy 6:16) He hath risen from the dead never no more to die and that is the environment the Church is being caught up to meet the Lord in. We are not in that as yet, death still has power over our physical body, but this is going to be changed. We are in the time of the catching up. We are rising to meet the Lord in the environment of immortality. ***This is the rapture of the Church!*** Not that we would be physically removed from this earth but that we would be spiritually removed from the realm of carnality that produces physical death. *"For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* (Rom. 8:6 and see St. John 17:15 also.)

The Rapture is On!

Now, I say to those who believe in the rapture theory, I believe in a rapture also and I teach it in the church but not like some are teaching it at this present time. Since the word rapture is not in the Bible, I looked it up in the World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary and here is what it says: **1.** a strong feeling that absorbs the mind, very great joy, **2.** a feeling of being lifted high in the mind and the spirit, (and here is the one that defines it best) ... **3.** great happiness and perfect joy but often suggests *being filled with it rather than being excited by it*. The traditional church is excited about a rapture. They are excited about a future event. They are excited about being caught up to heaven; but the ones who are truly *raptured* are the ones who are filled with the knowledge and truth of what *"being caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"* really means.

"Seek Those Things Which Are Above"

As I said earlier there is a catching up, there is a raising up, but we are not taking one foot off this good earth. The Bible says in Col. 3:2.... *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above (or up), where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." It didn't say wait until you get to heaven and you will have them, it says "seek those things which are above.....for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

There are some things that are above life in this world. You know what is above hate? - **LOVE!** Do you know what is above strife? -**JOY** - You want to know what is above wrath? - **PEACE!** Do you know what is above revellings? -**LONGSUFFERING** - You know what is above variance? -**GENTLENESS** - Do you know what is above witchcraft? -**FAITH** - Want to know what is above adultery? -**GOODNESS** - Do you know what is above idolatry? - **MEEKNESS** - And do you know that above uncleanness there is **TEMPERANCE** and against these there is no law? Yes, there are some things for us to seek that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Once we understand that we will rejoice to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We might be filled with the rapture any minute if we keep on going, Praise the Lord, for *"he HATH raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Eph. 2:6) The light of immortality that the Lord is bringing His Church into in this hour is surely a heavenly place He has made us sit together in!!

Chapter 11

IN SUMMING UP

We have three categories of people that we have studied here in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. What are they and in what order do they come forth?

1. The "asleep in Jesus"

They are all the saints who have departed this life and gone on to be with the Lord.... *"even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."* They shall return with Jesus. They shall receive their glorified, immortal body at the same time as the *dead in Christ* are changed.

2. The "dead in Christ"

These are all the saints who have died out to the Adam nature, the overcoming company, the 144,000, the ones who shall be changed while walking on in the things of God right here on earth, the Church of Jesus Christ that shall be perfected in this last day. This Company shall rise first to the world in manifestation of the eternal state of their being that Jesus purchased for us at Calvary, a redeemed man, spirit, soul, AND BODY, one that has fully come forth in His likeness and image.

3. The "alive and remain"

These are they that shall hear and adhere to the message of God that shall be ministered through the Overcoming Company, the Firstfruit Company, the Sons of God. The *alive and remain* shall be caught up to the same understanding of God and receive the same change as the *dead in Christ* Company, being transformed by the renewing of their mind into His likeness and image. Then shall the scripture be fulfilled.... *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death".* (1 Cor. 15:24)

The Day of the Lord

This passage of scripture in 1 Thess. 4:13-17 is speaking of the Day of the Lord; it is actually dealing with a thousand year period of time which is the 7th day, the Sabbath day of God, the millennial reign, the 1,000 year reign with Christ. These are all terms used for this period of time we are now entering. We must understand that we are NOW ENTERING that day. Until the Holy Ghost quickens your mind to the "now day" instead of the "day to come" you will never be in the coming of that day!

Revival shall be brought to this world with the *dead in Christ* and the *asleep in Jesus* ruling and reigning with Christ, speaking words of life to a dying world. Those who are *alive and remain* shall be caught up during this time to the same place in God, to the same understanding, to the same maturity in Christ as those who are reigning with Christ have already reached.

The Eighth Day

Then when this 1,000 year period of reigning with Christ is complete, it shall be the beginning of a new order, a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. It will be a new government on earth with all believing in God. It will not be a democracy but it will be a theocracy, under the supervision of the chosen of God. It will be a day of resurrection of the ungodly, the judgment of the wicked dead. The eighth day is the cutting away of the flesh (Luke 2:21). It is the Year of Jubilee, the restoration of all things of God, Glory to His Name! That is the eighth day, but the day we are entering into now is the seventh day and that is all that our scripture in 1 Thessalonians Chapter. 4 is dealing with, the calling out of a people for His name's sake, the perfection of the Church of Jesus Christ, The Rapture of the Church, and it will take place right here on this good old earth. May God Bless these words to your heart, Amen!