

Notes from 1 Thess. - Chapter 4 Rapture of the Church

There is much encouragement in this chapter, not only for life, but also exhortation to live a quiet life and be a solid witness to those who are observing. In verse 4:13 Paul answers a question that had been brought back by Timothy for him to deal with. A little background...all of the early believers thought Christ would return in their lifetime, that His return was imminent. Of course they had no new Testament, only the Jewish writings we call the "old Testament" and the Apostles testimony.

Paul had taught them about Christ, and His return, and the need to live a Holy Life and be a witness until His return. His direct ministry was short in Thessalonica and he needed to add some teaching on this point for them. As you might imagine, several of the believers had died and the believers were concerned about what would happen to them. Paul responds with this teaching on the Snatching Away or the Rapture as a source of comfort to them.

The body of scripture, sermons, and commentaries/books we have makes this point fairly clear to those who search it out, but that is not the case for them. **There are no signs that need to be fulfilled before the Rapture.** The signs given in the Bible such as the Rapture, the State of Israel, the Apostasy, the Deceptions, the One-world government and One-world religion, Tribulation, and the Antichrist are all signs for the **2nd Coming** of Christ, which is totally different in time, purpose, and effect.

How will Christians know the Rapture is come?

Christ will return in the clouds visibly, with a loud command

- Unmistakable shout from an Angel
- Trumpet call of God (probably the shofar sounding assembly)
- The Dead in Christ (believers who have died believing in Christ) will be called up and their earthly bodies will be imperishable and are united with their souls which are already with the Lord
- The believers who are alive will be "raptured" or snatched away to join them in the clouds with imperishable body and soul
- Each believer stands before the Lord In the Judgment Seat of Christ for his/her rewards (not a salvation judgment, that was finished at Calvary)

What will be the effect?

- All believers from Pentecost until the Rapture (the Church Age) will be called home to be with the Lord. Graves will open and millions will just disappear from the Earth in the twinkling of an eye
- This will include babies, unborn, children under the age of accountability, and those who have mental abilities such that they cannot make the informed choice.
- In the US alone, this could be as many as 100 Million people snatched away

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Who will be left and what is next?

- All those who did not profess true belief and a saving faith in Christ will be left. This includes Jews, Muslims, Hindu, Atheists, and unbelievers of all types. This also includes social Christians who attended churches of all types but who did not really know and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, Savior, and King.
- Much debate over who is and who isn't a true Christian. It is not our call thankfully, but the Lord knows His Sheep
- Estimates of 50% of membership rolls of a church are projected to be "left behind"

What is next?

- Restrainer (Holy Spirit) is also called home since the indwelled believers are all gone, and Evil goes rampant. This period is 7 years long and called the Tribulation Period
- Read Revelation to see the Tribulation period, but the Antichrist is revealed, the one-world government comes into place, and the False Prophet emerges to consolidate the belief ("church"). Remember the true Christians are all gone
- People still come to the Lord during this period but the persecution is intense and many are martyred in the period. Huge "come to Jesus" within the Jewish ranks as the 2 witnesses and 144,000 Jewish Evangelists preach like Billy Graham and gather masses of people to the Lord.
- Finally the Lord Comes back, The final battle happens, Satan bound, armies against Israel are all killed
- All the dead without Christ are resurrected to stand trial in what is called the Great White Throne Judgment, where they will be consigned to the Lake of Fire
- Millennium of 1000 year reign set up on earth where those who survived the Tribulation (all believers), and those resurrected in the Church Age are all together under the reign of Christ
- Eternity with the Lord after Satan and the remaining unbelievers are consigned to Lake of Fire. New Earth, New Heaven, New Jerusalem

Obviously I have given a very shorthand version of this since thousands of pages of commentary and many other scripture references exist.