

## The Rapture – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

*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: 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

This short study will consider whether Christ will come and snatch away believers to usher in a 1,000-year reign of Christ. The event is referred to in some circles as the Rapture. The purpose of this study is not to study every scripture used to support the teachings surrounding the Rapture. Instead, this short study will consider the context of the passage, highlight the details in this study, and make an evaluation of what the passage is saying. It will also give a small discussion of the word “rapture” as used to explain the doctrine. In other words, this study should make it clear this verse does not support the ideas found in the theological presentation of “The Rapture.”

The word “rapture” comes from a Latin word that is not found in the King James Version of the Bible. It is a theological term that is used to explain a word found in the Greek text. The Greek word is “harpagesometha”. The theological invention of “The Rapture”, for whatever reason, substituted the English translation of “harpagesometha” from “caught up” to the Latin translation “rapture.” The King James version of the Bible still uses the words “caught up”. Other translations of the Bible into English also use the words “caught up”. These translations include *English Standard Version*, *The New International Version*, *The Message*, *Christian Standard Bible*, and *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*. It is not clear to this writer why the Latin translation of the word is used instead of the English translation of the word.

Verse sixteen of the text under study will reveal the following facts. Jesus Christ will descend from heaven. It will be a very noisy descent. Whether a person is living in a part of the world that has daylight hours or a part of the world that is in the middle of the night, there will be a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the sounding of the trump of God. There will not be anything sneaky about this descent. It will happen with a great fanfare. Not only will there be a great fanfare with the coming of Christ, but there will also be a resurrection of dead saints.

Verse seventeen of the text under study will reveal the following facts. The saints living at the time of Christ’s coming will be snatched away from the earth and meet Christ in the clouds. The Greek text makes it clear the saints will spend the eternities of the eternities with the Lord. In other words, Christ will not sit foot back on the earth and neither will the saints once they have been caught up to be with Christ. Instead, there will be an eternal reunion with the saints who had died already and those who were still alive at the time of Christ’s coming. That reunion will happen away from the surface of the earth.

The saints in verse eighteen are encouraged to comfort one another with the words found in verses sixteen and seventeen.

2 Timothy 2:18 teaches us there were false teachers who were overthrowing the faith of some believers. These false teachers had erred from the truth. They were teaching the resurrection had past already. The context of the text we are studying was written in this setting in which Paul was seeking to overthrow the error being taught in the church with truth. The subject matter was specifically addressing the resurrection of the dead as it pertains to the righteous. The intent of the fourth chapter was not to suggest one resurrection of the righteous and another resurrection of the wicked. If it did, it would contradict such teachings of Jesus as found in John 5:28-29. The idea in 1 Thessalonians in context is the saved living will not stop the saved dead from participating in the resurrection at the coming of Jesus.

A careful consideration of the details of our lesson text in the context of the rest of the chapter makes it clear 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 does not support the theological teachings regarding “The Rapture.” Verse seventeen clearly teaches the meeting of the saints living and the saints who were dead will occur off this earth. There is not anything in the text that vaguely suggests the saints will return to the earth with Christ to a restored kingdom in the nation of Israel or anywhere else.