

The Undeniable Rapture | 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

- In these verses, Paul gives wonderful encouragement to living believers who are concerned about the future of their loved ones who have died.
 - He promises that they are **with him** and will return with Christ.
 - He promises that the grave is temporary, and the resurrection is real.
- Paul clearly teaches that there will come a time when deceased believers are raised from the dead and living believers are **caught up** and meet the Lord **in the air**.
- Whether you want to call it a rapture (the Latin term), the event is undeniably declared.
- This passage provides the foundation for the *fact* of the rapture, but it does not provide insight into the *timing* of the rapture.

The Conflict of Comings | Does Christ return more than once?

- Is the return of Christ *imminent*?
 - “likely or certain to happen very soon” (MacMillan’s Dictionary).
 - Matthew 24:21-22, 29 teach that a worldwide tribulation that threatens all living flesh will come *before* the Second Coming.
 - Prophetic Scripture teaches that there are several *prerequisites* to the Second Coming: the Tribulation, the Antichrist, the mark of the Beast, the Abomination of Desolation, the sun turning black, etc.
 - How does this reconcile with the many passages that instruct believers to “be ready” for the coming of the Lord, which is “at hand” and “coming quickly?” (1 Thes. 5:6 and others).
- Is the return of Christ visible?
 - Matthew 24:27 – visible to all
 - 1 Corinthians 15:52 – in the twinkling of an eye
- Do we meet in the air or on the earth?
 - 1 Thes. 4:17 – in the air
 - Zechariah 14:3-5a – on the Mount of Olives
- There are too many conflicts with the coming of the Lord if you only see *one coming*. The literal reader of God’s Word is forced to recognize *Christ will return more than once*.

The Issue of Timing | Post-Trib, Mid-Trib, or Pre-Trib?

- Believers in a post-tribulation rapture teach that believers will go through the tribulation, then will be raptured to the sky to meet the Lord, then immediately return with Him to the Mount of Olives.
 - Matthew 24:22 can be used as “proof,” provided that you define “the elect” to be “the church.” Compare Isaiah 65:8-9, 15, 22 for a Biblical definition of “the elect.”
 - The post-trib view necessitates mixing “the church” with the nation of Israel.
 - This is problematic since the church is “neither Jew nor Gentile.”
 - Daniel 7:24-29 has “declared” an additional seven years for God to deal directly with Israel as a nation, thus making a post-trib position theologically impossible.
- Believers in a mid-trib rapture teach that the church will experience the first half of the tribulation.
 - “Proof” is given in that 1 Thes. 1:10 says that believers will be saved from “the wrath to come.”
 - Romans 6:17, in the sixth seal, declares that the “day of his wrath is come.”
 - The mid-trib (also called “pre-wrath”) position does not allow for the full seven-year period for God to deal directly with Israel, thus this is theologically impossible.
- Believers in a pre-trib rapture are called *dispensational* and teach that the church will be raptured at any time, followed by a full seven-year tribulation in which God deals directly with Israel.
 - In 2 Thes. 2:1-4, Paul comforts the church, who had become persuaded that they were in the Tribulation (i.e.: the day of the Lord).
 - This church was shaken to its very foundations with this thought.
 - Why would a group be so shaken if they had been taught that this was going to happen and that they should prepare?
 - Paul concludes 2 Thessalonians with an encouragement to check his handwriting (2 Thes. 3:17). This indicates that the “letter as from us” (2:2) was a forgery.
 - In fact, Paul had taught a pre-Trib rapture based on the timing of 1 Thes. 4-5.
 - We are “looking for that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) of the rapture, and can “comfort one another with these words” (1 Thes. 4:18).