



# I THESSALONIANS

a future for now

## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – What Happens To Christians When They Die?

April 28, 2024

*...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 (ESV)*

*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 1 Thessalonians 2:19 (ESV)*

*...not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (ESV)*

### What happens to Christians who die?

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:13 (ESV)*

#### Why does Paul use the term sleep instead of death?

- Sleep is temporary. Death is permanent.
- Cemetery comes from the Greek word for dormitory, a sleeping place.

*...he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." John 11:11 (ESV)*

*And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

*Acts 7:60 (ESV)*

*And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts 7:59 (ESV)*

*That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died (see your Bible's footnote). 1 Corinthians 11:30 (ESV)*

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:6 (ESV)

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51 (ESV)

### **Is there soul sleep?**

And he (the rich man) called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' Luke 16:24 (ESV)

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 (ESV)

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. Philippians 1:23 (ESV)

### **Should we grieve when a Christian dies?**

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15 (ESV)

Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Philippians 2:27 (ESV)

### **As Christians, what is our hope when we grieve?**

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 Thessalonians 2:1 (ESV)

## **Where do we find the rapture in the Bible?**

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,... 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)

- Greek *harpazo* — to snatch away. In Latin, it is *rapio*, where we get the word rapture.

## **What does the Bible say about the rapture?**

### **1. What are the pillars of the rapture?**

#### **A. The Death Of Christ**

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)

## **B. The Resurrection Of Christ**

*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)*

*But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* 1 Corinthians 15:23 (ESV)

*...because I live, you also will live.* John 14:19b (ESV)

*And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

*1 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV)*

*...knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.* 2 Corinthians 4:14 (ESV)

## **C. The Revelation Of Christ**

*For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* 1 Thessalonians 4:15 (ESV)

### **2. Who will participate in the rapture?**

*For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* 1 Thessalonians 4:15 (ESV)

### **3. What is the plan of the rapture?**

*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)

*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.* John 5:25 (ESV)

*...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* 1 Corinthians 15:52 (ESV)

*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)

who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

#### 4. What is the benefit of the rapture?

Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (ESV)

#### Addendum — The rapture may NOT be what you think.

In these verses, the return of Christ is public, not secret.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God... 1

Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)

**The Greek word for “meeting” ALWAYS refers to a welcoming committee that meets a dignitary and returns to a town. It NEVER refers to meeting a dignitary and heading someplace else.**

But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Matthew 25:6 (ESV)

And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. Acts 28:15 (ESV)

- These verses do not teach Jesus returning for a secret rapture of the church to remove them from the earth for seven years of tribulation. They teach a public return of Jesus when all the Christians of history are given resurrection bodies to be on the welcoming committee.

#### Life Group Questions

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1. **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13.** Why does the Bible refer to the death of a Christian as sleep? In death, what happens to the body and soul of a Christian?
2. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13, should we cry when a loved one dies? Where is hope found in the tears over a Christian's death?
3. What is the rapture? Why is it the great hope of Christians?
4. When Jesus returns, what happens to dead and living Christians? What is the difference? Why is this important?
5. **Extra Credit:** Were you taught a secret rapture where the church would escape to heaven for seven years? What about this passage teaches a public return of Jesus to be with his church on earth?
6. Instead of creating end-times views disagreements, what is the purpose of this passage, and why is that important to remember? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13+18)