

1 Thessalonians 4 - The Rapture of the Church

II. Practical section: looking forward (1 Thess 4:1—5:28)

(1) Christian living (4:1-12)

(A) General conduct (4:1-2)

(B) Negative exhortation: sexual purity (4:3-8)

(C) Positive exhortation: brotherly love (4:9-12)

(2) Rapture and the destiny of the dead in Christ (4:13-18)

1st Thessalonians 4

II. Practical section: looking forward (1 Thess 4:1—5:28)

(1) Christian living (4:1-12)

(A) General conduct (4:1-2)

1 Finally then, brothers *and* sisters, we request and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received *instruction* from us as to **how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel even more.**

1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

1 Now then, brothers, you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, as in fact you are doing. We ask and encourage you in the Lord to do so even more.

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

- "Finally then" - Paul has answered the questions about his character in chapters 1-3, now he transitions to deal with the doctrinal questions that they Thessalonians had given to Timothy when he returned to Thessalonica

— Now that Paul's credentials as an apostle are restored, and he has rehabilitated his reputation among the Thessalonian church, he now begins to offer some correction and encouragement

- "...brothers *and* sisters" - see notes on 2:17

- "...we request and urge you in the Lord Jesus" - Paul is asserting his apostolic authority. He's telling them that what he is telling them is on equal authority as Scripture. The words Paul spoke to them, he is saying, have equal authority as the words of Jesus Christ Himself.

- This was the function of an apostle: to reveal new truth in the Church Age
- This is why Paul is so concerned about his reputation in chapters 1-3...because if his reputation is tarnished, they are not going to receive what he is saying as apostolic truth. But now he says, because his reputation has been rehabilitated, that they were now in a position to receive direct Scripture from him.
- "...how you ought to walk and please God" - a phrase that summarizes the Christian walk: some Christians look to the Bible to get answers for every one of their questions, but the Bible is not setup that way.
- The Bible gives us a set of principles of living, along with examples. But by definition it cannot cover every single issue or question that may come up in someone's life. Instead, it gives us overarching principles to govern our conduct.
- This is one of those principles: is my walk, what I'm doing on a daily basis, pleasing to God? If I live my life under the direction that in everything I say or do, I want to please God, that is going to cover just about every aspect of my life. It is going to have influence over almost all of our choices.
- The overarching principle in the Church Age for the walk of the believer is...is it pleasing to God?
- "...just as you actually do walk" - Paul inserts a parenthetical statement here asserting that due to the report he received back from Timothy, it appears as if the Thessalonians are actually practicing this principle in their walk with Christ
- "...that you excel *even* more" - Paul says that he wanted them to continue these baby steps into spiritual adulthood/maturity
- Keep in mind that they likely didn't have any NT book at this point. Galatians was written about 2 years prior, but it's unlikely that book had circulated from Asia Minor into Europe yet. They may have had the Gospel of Matthew, but that's debatable. They might have had the book of James. Yet these people are growing despite the fact that they had very limited revelation at this point, if they had any revelation at all.
- It's a bit of a wakeup call that these Thessalonians, as new believers, were walking in a positive direction with the Lord and enduring persecution without forsaking their faith, and they only had a very limited revelation. Today, we have the completed canon, the full revelation of God, yet so many Christians fold and become unfaithful in the midst of trials.
- With God, it's not a matter of how much you know; it's a matter of whether you're being faithful with the things that you do know (Luke 16:10).
- So Paul commends them that they are taking positive steps with the limited revelation that they did have

2 For you know what instructions **we** gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus.

2 For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus.

- 2 You know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.
- 2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.
- "...we" - the apostles
- Paul says that when I talk, I speak with scriptural authority because I was called into my apostleship by Jesus Christ

NT Scriptures That Put the NT on Scriptural Par with the OT

- 1 Tim 5:17-18: Paul quotes both the OT and the NT in the same verse, and labels both as "Scripture"
- 2 Peter 3:15-16: Peter declares that the things Paul was saying were given to him by divine wisdom

(B) Negative exhortation: sexual purity (4:3-8)

3 For this is the will of God, **yoursanctification**; *that is*, that you **abstain** from **sexualimmorality**;

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

3 For it is God's will that you be sanctified: You must abstain from sexual immorality.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

- Many Christians pray for the will of God in their lives, and here Paul tells us what the will of God is: that we be sanctified, meaning that we abstain from sexual immorality

— About 5x in the Bible it comes out and says, Here is God's will for you. Everyone wants some kind of special vision, should I live in city A or city B? Should I take job A or job B? We're all waiting for the will of God to unfold in our lives, but we miss the very clear statements where God says, Here is My will for you.

— Luke 16:10 says that he who is faithful in a little thing will be faithful in much; he who is unrighteous in little things will be unrighteous in much. In other words, why would God entrust us with a blueprint for our lives if we can't even be faithful to Him in the little things that the Bible specifically lays out for us.

— If you're seeking God's will for your life, who you should marry, where should you live, the first step is to be faithful to God in the things that you know, the things that He's given to you. If you're faithful to God in what you do know, God can see that you'll be faithful to Him with much, and God can start, in His timing, to unfold what His purposes are for your life in those areas that the Bible may not address specifically.

- "...your sanctification" - God's specific will for our lives is that we grow up and mature in the middle tense of our salvation

— How we know we're growing in our sanctification is that we abstain from sexual immorality

- "...abstain" - why is Paul focusing on sexual immorality here? It's an argument from lesser to greater...the sex drive in human beings is so strong that if, under God's power, you can bring that desire under control, by channeling sexual energies completely to the marriage bed, then everything else is easy.

— Our sexual desires are the most difficult thing in the Christian life to get under control

— James uses the same type argument for taming the tongue (James 3:7-8). If you can control your tongue, everything else in the Christian life is easy by comparison.

- "...sexual immorality" - if there is such thing as sexual immorality, then there must be a sexual morality

— God created standards for marriage and for sex (sexual morality). Marriage is between one man and one woman for one lifetime (Gen 1:27; 2:24; Cf. Heb 13:4). Sex was created to be inside of marriage only; all sex outside of marriage is sexual immorality.

Sanctification

Three distinct aspects:

1. Positional sanctification means we are accepted in the Beloved, and we will never be more saved than at the moment we put our trust in Christ. This positional sanctification is also called Justification.
2. Practical sanctification is the Holy Spirit working in our lives to produce a holiness in our walk. This is a work-in-progress, and will never be perfect so long as we are in these bodies with our old sinful flesh.
3. Total sanctification (glorification) will occur in the future when we are conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

4 that each of you know how to possess **his own vessel** in sanctification and honor,

4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

4 Each of you must know how to control his own body in a holy and honorable manner,

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

- "...his own vessel" - there are two major interpretation views here: (1) to acquire a wife or (2) to possess your own body:

1. To acquire a wife (get married): those who argue for this view pull what Paul says in 1 Cor 7:5 about getting one's sexual energies satisfied in the context of marriage, because if the sexual energies are not satisfied by your spouse, you will often look to get them satisfied somewhere else.

- "vessel" is used elsewhere (1 Peter 3:7 [KJV]) to describe a wife (same Greek word [*skeuos*] used here).
 - The problem with this view is that Paul knows how to use the word "wife" (*gynē*) (Eph 5:22). So if Paul is telling the Thessalonians to get married in order to provide for themselves an outlet for their sexual energy, it's a very strange way to say that.
2. To possess your own body: probably the better interpretation of this verse is to "possess" (rule over, put into subjugation) your own body, specifically your sexual energy/urges.
- "vessel" is used to describe people/bodies (Rom 9:22-23; 2 Cor 4:7; 2 Tim 2:21) (same Greek word [*skeuos*] used here).
 - Paul is saying that we need to learn, under God's power, to control our bodies, specifically our sexual energy, and how to possess/own our own mind, because private thoughts lead to public actions.

5 Reasons for Sexual Purity

1. Sexual immorality characterizes pagans (v5)
2. Sexual immorality invokes God's judgment on both parties (v6a)
3. Previous warnings against sexual immorality (v6b)
4. Sexual immorality frustrates God's holy call on the believer's life (v7)
5. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer toward purity (v8)

5 not in lustful passion, like **the Gentiles who do not know God**;

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

5 not with passion and lust like the gentiles who do not know God.

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

- The God-empowered man rules his body. Passion is always used by Paul in the bad sense.

- "...the Gentiles" - the nations. In the usual sense it's non-Jews, but here it's used to denote non-Christians, which is obvious from the context (Cf. Rom 1:18,28)

- "...who do not know God" - the notion of sexual immorality comes from pagans, or those who do not know God

— When Christians engage in sexual immorality and lustful passions, they are acting like the pagans, acting like they do not know God, because sexual immorality characterizes the lives of unbelievers

— In the various "vice lists" throughout the NT, they all talk about sexual immorality as characterizing unbelievers (Cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:5; Gal 5:19-21; Rev 21:8; 22:15)

6 *and* that no one violate the rights and **take advantage of** his brother *or sister* in the matter, because **the Lord is *the* avenger** in all these things, just as we also **told you previously and solemnly warned you**.

6 *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.

6 Furthermore, you must never take advantage of or exploit a brother in this regard, because the Lord avenges all these things, just as we already told you and warned you.

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

- The second reason Paul gives for sexual purity is that those who engage in sexual immorality invoke the judgment of God

- "...take advantage of" - *pleonekteō*, to defraud [NASB95]; how does sexual immorality defraud a brother/sister?

— If you're a sister (in Christ) and you engage in sexual immorality with a brother (in Christ), you've just brought down the judgment of God onto both of you. If you commit adultery with your neighbor's wife, you've defrauded/injured your neighbor.

- "...the Lord is *the* avenger" - God does not take kindly to the violation of His sexual principles (Cf. Heb 13:4c)

— We need to understand that God will unmask and embarrass Christians for their sexual immorality and misconduct. God uses this judgment as a severe incentive for us to avoid sexual immorality.

- "...told you previously and solemnly warned you" - the third reason to avoid sexual immorality is because Paul had warned the Thessalonians (and believers today) not to engage in sexual immorality, and the judgment that will result from it.

7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification.

7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to be holy.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

- The fourth reason to remain sexually pure is that sexual immorality frustrates God's calling on the believer's life

— God wants us to grow up/mature in the middle tense of our salvation. This is why Peter says that we are to be holy, just as the One who called us is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). God wants us to grow up/mature and begin living our new identity.

— We'll never be sinless, but we should be sinning less as time goes by, through God's power. If a Christian isn't doing this, they've missed God's will for their life. We're often more concerned about what job to take, what career path to take, which house to buy,

which spouse to take...but if we miss this, we miss the purpose for why we're here: to live a sanctified lifestyle.

— Thus, when you are sexually immoral, it does nothing but frustrate the calling of God upon your life, which is to grow in the middle tense of our salvation

8 Therefore, the one who rejects *this* is not rejecting man, but the God **who gives His Holy Spirit to you.**

8 So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

8 Therefore, whoever rejects this instruction is not rejecting human authority but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

- The fifth and final reason for why we should abstain from sexual immorality is because the Holy Spirit empowers us toward purity

- Paul again puts his words and teaching here on par with any other portion of Scripture, including Jesus' own words

— What he's saying here is that when we engage in sexual immorality, we are frustrating the work of the Holy Spirit in our life, because God gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us against sin, including sexual immorality

- "...who gives His Holy Spirit to you" - this is how the sexually moral lifestyle becomes possible: because we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us that is greater than ourselves

— If I dial into that power by faith, moment-by-moment, I find that the poison that comes off of my tongue can be controlled, and even the sex drive itself, as powerful as it is, can be brought under proper discipline and channeled the right way (Cf. Gal 5:16).

(C) Positive exhortation: brotherly love (4:9-12)

9 Now as to the love of the brothers *and* sisters, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are **taught by God to love one another;**

9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

9 Now you do not need anyone to write to you about brotherly love, since you have been taught by God to love each other.

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

- "Now as" - *peri de*, indicates that Paul is changing subject matter to a new topic (Cf. 5:1). Paul now moves from the topic of sexual immorality to begin talking about the priority of love.

— At this point, he had not yet written the letter to the Corinthians, where in 1 Cor 13 he lays out one of the most magnificent descriptions about what love is

— In John 13:35, Jesus says: **By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."**

— These Thessalonians had no need to be told again about the need to love one another

- "...taught by God" - all the way back in Lev 19:18, in the Mosaic Law, God commanded His people to love their neighbor as themselves.

- "...love one another" - we use the term "love" so often today that we've completely lost sight of what biblical love really is. Today, it's become a syrupy term that is thrown around, especially by the younger generation, to denote an emotion of favorability that they have for someone else.

— That's not what love is. Love is an action, not a feeling. And as far as the Bible is concerned, love for our brothers and sisters in Christ will always manifest itself in actions.

Gal 6:10: So then, while we have opportunity, let's do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

10 for indeed you practice it toward all the brothers *and sisters* who are in all **Macedonia**. But **we urge you**, brothers *and sisters*, to excel *even* more,

10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

10 In fact, you are showing love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia, but we urge you, brothers, to keep on doing this even more.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

- Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the need to love one another, which they already knew, and now he tells them that they are already exercising this command with those in Macedonia

- "...Macedonia" - the area surrounding Thessalonica, to the north; the "county" where Thessalonica was located

— Paul comments in 2 Cor 8:1-5 how loving the Macedonians were in their sacrificial giving, giving beyond their ability. These were some of the most selfless, sacrificial people in all the NT. It's likely that they learned to be this way because of the example of the Thessalonians.

— The generosity of the Thessalonians triggered a lifestyle of generosity in the Macedonians. Sometimes ministry is more caught than taught.

- Even as well as the Thessalonians were doing, Paul tells them that in your progressive sanctification, there's always more room to grow

— We never "arrive" in the middle tense of our salvation...the Holy Spirit is always prompting us toward a new level of maturity, a new level of trust/faith, and a new level of obedience

— Paul later wrote the he presses on toward his purpose in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14)

To dwell above with saints in love Oh, that will be glory. But to stay below with the saints I know— Well, that's another story.

11 and **to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life** and **attend to your own *business*** and **work with your hands, just as we instructed you,**

11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

11 Also, make it your goal to live quietly, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you,

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

- "...to make it your ambition" - *philotimeomai*, aspiration; used only here and Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 5:9.

— In Rom 15:20, Paul says it is his ambition to preach the gospel to those who hadn't yet heard it

— In 2 Cor 5:9, Paul says that whether he's in heaven or on the earth, his ambition is to be pleasing to God

— The same ambition that Paul had to preach the gospel to the lost/unhearing, or to be pleasing to God wherever he was, the Thessalonians were to have with the commands he gives them in this verse.

— In other words, Paul says this is how you demonstrate love for the brethren...by obey the commands of this verse

- The problems mentioned in 2 Thess 3:11-12 gave rise to these exhortations. These problems have already begun to surface in the Thessalonian church, about being lazy and not working because they believe the Lord's return is very soon.

- "...lead a quiet life" - *hēsychazō*, the idea of restfulness, a lifestyle of peace and tranquility; this Greek word doesn't mean to remain quiet as in not talking or keeping silent (Cf. 1 Tim 2:12)

— It's not having to assert yourself constantly

— It's the same idea as expressed in 1 Peter 3:3-4 regarding how saved women are to relate to their unsaved husbands. That passage is not saying that a woman cannot beautify herself (*If the barn needs painting, then paint the barn* [J.V. McGee]. It's talking about emphasis between outer beauty and inner beauty, and Peter says that while there is

nothing wrong with outer beauty, inner beauty should be of more emphasis/priority because that is how you're going to win your husband to Christ.

— The same idea is expressed here...the idea of leading a quiet, restful life is to be our priority

- "...attend to your own *business*" - when I'm minding my own business, I'm not intruding over and over again into the life of my neighbor. When I'm intruding over and over into the life of my Christian brother or sister, I'm not being a loving person because I'm causing him or her constant irritation.

— In John 21:18-22 Jesus makes a prediction about how Peter is going to die. When Peter heard this, he asked "What about John?" Jesus basically told Peter to "butt out" and that what God's will was for John's life and the circumstances around his death were none of Peter's business.

- "...work with your hands" - ever since the Fall of man in Eden, there is no escape from work (Gen 3:17-19a). If you want to survive economically, you have to work. Prior to the Fall, Adam & Eve worked for pure enjoyment, but those days are gone.

— Jesus understood manual labor; He was the Son of a carpenter (Matt 13:55)

— Paul also understood manual labor as he supported himself on his second missionary journey by working day and night as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3; Cf. 1 Thess 2:9)

— This is related to love because if you're a financial or economic burden to other people, that is not loving them (Eph 4:28; 1 Tim 5:8; 1 Thess 2:9)

- "...just as we instructed you" - Paul was giving the Thessalonians commands/imperatives which were on par with anything that Jesus Himself ever said (Cf. 4:1,8)

— When Paul speaks, God speaks; when Paul speaks Jesus speaks; when Paul speaks the Holy Spirit speaks

— Paul was functioning as a sanctioned apostolic representative of Jesus Christ, thus Paul is speaking and writing God's Word

- In the Upper Room, Jesus told the disciples that He had many more things to say to them, but they could not bear them now (John 16:12-13). Those "many other things" make up the rest of the NT.

— Jesus also told the disciples in the Upper Room that after His ascension, the Holy Spirit will "teach you all things" (referring to the NT epistles) and "remind you of all that I said to you" (referring to the Gospels). This is how John, when he wrote his three epistles, some 60 years after Jesus' ministry, could recall with iron-clad precision exactly what Jesus said and taught.

[1 Cor 7:10,12; 2 Peter 3:15-16]

2 Thess 3:11-12:

11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

12 Now we command and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to work peacefully and eat their own bread.

12 so that you will behave properly toward **outsiders** and not be in any need.

12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

12 so that you may win the respect of outsiders, and have need of nothing.

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

- Paul now gives the Thessalonians two results they will reap if they walk in love, according to the commands of v11...

1. The church will have a proper testimony to the unsaved world

- Self-sufficiency (leading a quiet life, minding your own business, working with your hands) wins the respect of unbelievers
- Paul always taught that if the unsaved world is going to be offended, let it be offended at our message, because the gospel is offensive (Gal 5:11). Don't allow them to be offended because of a lazy, dependent, butt-in-ski attitude toward each other (1 Cor 6:1,6).
- One of the qualifications for elders is that they must have a good reputation with those outside of the church (1 Tim 3:7).

2. You won't be in need (Eph 4:28)

- "...outsiders" - non-believers

It was not Paul's intent that the church should disrupt society or overthrow governments. Rather, he encouraged Christians to be good citizens and exemplary members of their families and of their society, in a manner consistent with the teachings of Christ. Only in this sense was the Pauline gospel intended to change society. It set out to change the individuals who made up society while awaiting that climactic event when the power of God would truly change the world forever.

Every chapter in Thessalonians deals with the Lord's Coming: 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-17; 5:1-11,23

The Rapture

Before the Millennial Kingdom, He would leave and go to heaven. He would prepare a place for them in heaven, and He would come back to receive them unto Himself. He would take them to glory before He set up His kingdom on the earth.

Note: It was a promise to the Church that the Holy Spirit would take up residence in them and that a specific place was reserved for them—separate from their return to the Earth (Zech 12; 14:4-9). The early Christians were looking for some to be taken home before death. Their confusion in this regard reinforces the belief that they had no expectation of any intervening prophecy which must take place prior to the Rapture or the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Thessalonians were not concerned about their salvation, nor that Christ would be coming for them. They knew that there were a number of resurrections. (They called their burial places *koimeteria*, dormitories...cemeteries.) Their question was "when?" Their concern argues for an early date for this epistle.

There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is condemnation before investigation. — Edmund Spencer

(2) Rapture and the destiny of the dead in Christ (4:13-18)

13 But we do not want you to be **uninformed**, brothers *and sisters*, about **those who are asleep**, so that **you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope**.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

13 But we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve like other people who have no hope.

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.

- "...uninformed" - *agnoeō*, ignorant; Paul uses this word very differently than we use it today. Today we use it to mean someone who is mentally slow, not smart, a little slow.

— Paul, on the other hand, uses it to denote something that he did not teach them about while he was there. So their ignorance was *his* problem, not *theirs*. It's more about not having the knowledge to answer a question than it is about a person's mental acuity (Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8).

— Paul had not yet had the opportunity to explain to the Thessalonians how the Rapture applied to Christians who had already died. This was the primary purpose of this epistle. Paul explains later (2 Cor 5:7; Phil 1:23) that if you're a believer and you die, your soul goes immediately into the presence of the Lord.

- "...those who are asleep" - after the unbelieving Jews pushed Paul out of Thessalonica, they began persecuting the believers in the church. There is good reason to believe that some of these believers were martyred for their faith.

— This question arose because Paul had taught them about the Rapture of the Church while he was in Thessalonica (Cf. 2 Thess 2:5). So it's likely that some believers at that

church died (martyred?) and now they are asking Paul what will happen to their loved ones when the Rapture happens.

— So this isn't a situation where Paul is giving them the doctrine of the Rapture for the first time. When Paul taught them about it while he was there, he evidently didn't have a chance to cover the fate of believers who had died, and how/whether they would participate in the Rapture.

— It was not the resurrection (Rapture) that disturbed the Thessalonians, but the fact that they might not see their departed brethren for a long time. They didn't know how their dead fellow Christians would participate in the Rapture *with them*. They apparently thought that one had to be alive to participate in the Rapture.

— Their confusion reinforces the belief that they had no expectation of any intervening prophecy which must take place prior to either the return of the Lord for the Church, or the Day of the Lord

— Their misunderstanding and need for clarification clearly points to a contradiction with Paul's previous teaching about the imminent return of Christ

- "...you will not grieve" - this is often misquoted to mean that when a loved one dies, we are not to grieve, as if the person who died has no hope

— Telling someone to not grieve when a loved one dies is a limitation that God does not put on anyone. Grieving is a perfectly normal and right way of responding to the death of a loved one. It is totally acceptable and completely biblical.

— What Paul is saying here is that it's perfectly fine to grieve, but don't grieve as if you are never going to see the person again. Grieving is fine, but we do so with a recognition that one day, we will get to see that person again.

- "...as indeed the rest of *mankind* do, who have no hope" - Paul did not deny that the death of a believer brings grief to his or her loved ones (Cf. John 11:35)

— Unbelievers grieve as if the deceased person is gone forever, that they will never see them again. It's a different type of grieving than that of a believer because we will see our believing loved one again at the Rapture.

— The backdrop/context for this command is the Greco-Roman belief system, which gave man no eternal hope after death. When a loved one died at that time, they would sob and mourn uncontrollably because that belief system held out no hope for life after death, so they believed that they would never see the deceased person again.

The Danger of Marginalizing Eschatology: Extraneous or Vital?

Eschatology is often marginalized by both enthusiasts and detractors! The theme of this chapter is that the coming of Christ is a purifying hope. It will change your life and affect your lifestyle, if you hold to the hope of the imminent coming of Christ for His own. If that

doesn't affect your life, you don't really believe it. It is just sort of a theory or a philosophy with you.

14 For **if** we believe that Jesus died and rose *from the dead*, so also God will **bring with Him** those who have **fallen asleep through Jesus**.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

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

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

- "...if" - first class condition in the Greek: "since"; denotes a condition that is true to reality
- The basis of Paul's (and our) confident hope is the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection provided the future victory over death for all who trust in Him (1 Cor 15:54-57).

- Since Christ was victorious over physical death, we should also believe that all Church Age believers who die physically will also undergo bodily resurrection

- The death and resurrection of Christ are among the best attested facts in history.

Furthermore, the Scriptures predicted these events before they occurred. Thus, we can be equally certain that the events of the Rapture, which Paul predicted here, will also happen.

- "...bring with him" - God will bring the spirits (in their resurrected bodies) of Christians who have died ("those who have fallen asleep") back with Jesus when He returns for the saints still living on earth

- It is only those who have died "in Jesus" (i.e., Christians as contrasted with all the saved of all ages) who will accompany our Lord in His return

- This is the "great reunion in the sky" where we see deceased Church Age believers whose souls went to be with Christ prior to the Rapture

- This phrase answered the main question of the Thessalonians, and is the primary purpose this epistle: in Acts 17, Paul was forced out of town by persecution before he had a chance to answer all of their questions about the Rapture. After Paul left, the church began to come under persecution, people started to die, and the question they had was whether or not they would ever see their dead loved ones again.

- "...fallen asleep" - the temporary state of a believer's physical body between physical death and resurrection (Matt 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 13:36; 1 Cor 11:30)

- "...through Jesus" - describes Church Age believers

- Paul expected to be alive when Christ returned (Cf. Phil 4:5; Titus 2:13). He clearly believed in an imminent Rapture.

15 For **we** say this to you by **theword of the Lord**, that **we** who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not **precede** those who have fallen asleep.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

15 For we declare to you what the Lord has told us to say: We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have died.

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.

- "...we" [2x] - first person plural, as opposed to third person "them"; this construction includes Paul, as well as his readers (the Thessalonian church) (Cf. 1 Cor 15:51)

— The fact that Paul uses the first person plural shows that he anticipated that Jesus would come back for the Church during his lifetime. He believed that he would participate in the Rapture.

— He wasn't looking for the Antichrist...

— Paul never lays out the signs/events that must take place before the Rapture can occur (doctrine of imminence)

— The NT never gives us any prerequisite events that must take place prior to the Rapture (Cf. James 5:8-9; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20)

- "...word of the Lord" - to reinforce the divine authority of his comments, Paul states that the information about these events originates directly from Jesus

— This therefore must be a reference to John 14:1-4, where Jesus described the Rapture (the coming for His Church) to the disciples in the Upper Room

— Paul is building his case for the Rapture from what Jesus already disclosed. He's just adding some meat to it here.

- "...precede" - when will the dead in Christ be raised? Answer: (just) before the living go to see the Lord

— Their concern was not: Is the Lord coming? Are we going to be with Him? But rather, what is going to happen to our loved ones who have preceded us in death?

— The fact that the living will have no advantage (preferential treatment) over the dead when Christ returns for His saints shows that excessive sorrow for dead believers, beyond the sorrow connected with their passing, is unjustified.

Jesus' Resurrection Body

- Could appear and disappear at will (Luke 24:31; John 20:19)
- Could move through solid walls (John 20:19,26)
- Could be seen and felt (Matt 28:9; Luke 24:36-42)
- He could eat food, although it apparently wasn't necessary (Luke 24:41-43)
- Though glorified, He could be recognized (Luke 24:30-31)

- No more experience of death, aging, crying, mourning, sorrow, or pain (Rev 21:4)

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with **ashout**, with **the voice of the archangel** and with **the trumpet of God**, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

16 With a shout of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of God's trumpet, the Lord himself will come down from heaven, and the dead who belong to the Messiah will rise first.

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:

- "...a shout...the voice...the trumpet of God" - this is the audible announcement of the Rapture

— "shout" - *keleusma*, a common Greek word for a verbal directive or command issued by someone in authority to those under him; denotes authority and urgency

— No information is given by Paul of the identity of the one who shouts, but John 5:25,28 indicates that at the "voice of the Son of God" the dead will live

— In John 11, Jesus specifically commanded Lazarus to come forth (otherwise, all would have "come forth")

— "voice of *the* Archangel" - only one archangel is mentioned in Scripture (Michael, Jude 9); this is not necessarily Michael

— "trumpet of God" - only here, and at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16,19)

— This is the same trumpet mentioned in 1 Cor 15:52 ("last trump") and the voice that sounds like a trumpet in Rev 4:1

— Not to be confused with the trumpet blast that will announce Christ's Second Coming (Matt 24:31), or with the seven Trumpet judgments of Revelation (Rev 8:2,7,8,10,12; 9:1,13; 11:15)

— The Revelation trumpet blasts assemble no one; they are not symbols of salvation; they are not symbols of deliverance; they are symbols of judgments on a Christ-rejecting world.

- "...dead in Christ will rise first" - after the three-fold announcement, the Rapture itself will begin with the rising of the dead in Christ

— These are the people the Thessalonians were concerned about, and evidently Paul hadn't taught them about while he was with them

— The "dead in Christ" refers to every believer in the Church Age (since Pentecost) who has died. Immediately upon death, their soul went to heaven to be with the Lord (Cf. Acts 7:59; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21-23) and remain there until the Rapture, when they are reunited with their resurrected body.

- These people receive their resurrected bodies first; their souls, which are in heaven, now receive a resurrected body. Once this happens, they begin to descend toward the earth, along with Christ.
- "in Christ" - a technical word that Paul uses 99x; it always refers to believers; OT saints are never described as being "in Christ"
- The only people who will participate in the Rapture are Church Age believers. If you track the phrase "in Christ" throughout the NT, it always refers to NT/Church Age believers.
- Only those who believe in Christ subsequent to His death are united with His death, burial and resurrection through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:3; 2 Cor 5:17) and enter the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).
- This does not refer to a general resurrection of dead saints from all history. Job, Moses, Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Isaiah, David or any other OT saints...will NOT participate in the Rapture.
- At the Rapture, the souls of those in heaven will descend from heaven with the Lord and their bodies will be resurrected "first" (Group A). Then the believers who are still alive will be caught up to be with the Lord, receiving resurrected bodies (Group B).
- "first" - *proton*, expresses a chronological sequence

See [Jewish Wedding Ceremony](#) for details on how the Jewish Wedding Ceremony is a model of the Rapture.

17 Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caughtup together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

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

17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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.

- "Then" - *epeita*, after the dead in Christ are raised first (v16); denotes a chronological order

- "...who are alive, who remain" - Group B (see v16)

- "...caught up" - *harpazō*, to seize, or to snatch away by a force that cannot be resisted (Cf. Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2,4; Rev 12:5)

— Translated in Jerome's Latin Vulgate as *rapio*, which was translated into English as the term "Rapture" (see below)

— As when the centurion ordered his troops to take Paul by force in order to rescue him from a possible lynching (Acts 23:10)

- Living saints will experience translation (Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-53; 2 Cor 5:1-4; Phil 3:20-21)— their bodies will become immortal, like Jesus' resurrection body
- "...in the clouds" - *en nephelais*, in clouds
- This phrase has led some to conclude that Christians will be caught up in huge masses *like* clouds, not *into* the clouds
- "in" is a legitimate translation of *en*, but *en* can also mean "on" or "with"; most scholars interpret this as atmospheric clouds
- Clouds are a regular feature of theophanies: at Sinai (Ex 19:16; 24:15-18); the Tabernacle (Ex 40:34); at Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11); at the Transfiguration (Matt 17, Mark 9:7); at the Ascension (Acts 1:9)
- "...to meet" - *apantēsis*, believers caught up from the earth (Group B) at the Rapture will meet resurrected saints who are descending with the Lord (Group A)
- Once believers "meet" the Lord "in the air," there is no indication of an immediate return to earth, as post-Tribulationists believe
- Post-Tribulationists interpret *apantēsis* as a technical term for a civic custom of antiquity whereby a public welcome was accorded by a city to important visitors. Those going out to meet the dignitary would then return with him to the city. This analogy is then used to support a post-Tribulation view of the Rapture.
- This is a good example of an interpretation that falsely assumes that a word always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning. Those who subscribe to this view hold that, on the basis of a specific technical meaning of *apantēsis*, Paul is describing "subjects of the King going out to meet the King" rather than the "bridegroom coming for His bride"
- *Apantēsis* does not have the technical meaning, as is shown both by the context of the passage, other uses in the NT (and those specific contexts), and how the word was used during secular writings of Paul's time
- For a detailed analysis, see [Zuber-1 Thessalonians 4:17 and "to meet"](#).
- "...we will always be with the Lord" - many theologians who debate or don't believe in a pre-Tribulational Rapture state that the Bible doesn't outline a venue of where believers go after the Rapture occurs. This passage just says these believers will forever be with the Lord, but it doesn't say where.
- The obvious answer is to heaven, which is clearly spelled out in John 14:1-3. However, most who don't believe in a pre-Tribulational Rapture don't believe that John 14:1-3 is a passage referring to the Rapture.

The rapture, though alluded to frequently in the NT, is really only described in detail in three passages: John 14:1-3, 1 Cor 15:51-54, and 1 Thess 4:13-18. One could possibly add Phil 3:20-21, but the reference is less specific there. Each of these passages contributes information about the event, and, taken together, we have a fairly complete description of

the event. However, the information from all 3 passages is required in order to piece together a complete picture of the rapture. The event takes place in five distinct movements:

1. The Lord Jesus, along with the spirits of those believers who have died during the church age, descends from heaven to earth's atmosphere.
2. The bodies of believers who have died during the church age are resurrected.
3. Believers who are alive at the time of the rapture are changed to receive glorified bodies.
4. Together, resurrected bodies of dead saints and changed living believers are caught up to the Lord in the atmosphere.
5. The assembled company of all believers from the entire church age, along with the Lord, accompanies the Lord on His journey from the atmosphere *to His next venue*.*

**to His next venue* could fit the description of a pre-Tribulational, mid-Tribulational, or post-Tribulational Rapture timeframe. Anyone who believes in a Rapture of the church would agree with this five-point description.

"Rapture" Not Found In Scripture?

One of the main arguments against the Rapture is that the term "rapture" does not appear in the Bible. People will say, I don't see the word Rapture in the Bible, therefore the doctrine of the Rapture is not a true doctrine. This argument is so old, so trite, and so easily refuted that it's shocking that people keep repeating it.

The answer to this is simple...there are a lot of words that people throw around today that aren't in the Bible. For example, the word Trinity is not in the Bible, but no traditional Christian would refute that doctrine. We use the word Trinity to describe something about which the idea is found in the Bible, but there is not a succinct way of explaining it. To explain the Trinity without using that word would result in circumlocution (having to explain every detail). Every discipline has the idea of circumlocution, for example lawyers use the term "negligence" or "vicarious liability" to describe complex ideas without having to explain every detail.

The idea that you don't believe a doctrine because you don't see the specific word in Scripture used to describe it is ludicrous. The word "Rapture" may be in the Bible, but the concept is there.

So where did we get the word "Rapture"? It comes from the Latin Vulgate, created by Jerome in the 4th century AD. We get the word "vulgar" from Vulgate, which means "common." Jerome was trying to create a Bible translation that was common to people, because as time went on, Latin arose as a common language, somewhat replacing Greek and Hebrew.

1 Thess 4:17 [Latin Vulgate]: *deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus*

- *Rapiemur* is the proper tense of *rapio*: the English words "rapt" and "rapture" come from the past participle of *rapio*

When Jerome got to "caught up" in 1 Thess 4:17, he translated it into Latin as *rapiemur*, which when translated into English we get "rapture." So it goes from the Greek to the Latin to the English. So this is where we get the term "rapture." So people who say that the word "rapture" is not in the Bible so it must not be a valid doctrine simply have to ask them to open their Latin Bible.

18 Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

18 So then, encourage one another with these words.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

- Based on this verse, we should not worry about the state of the world, even though it's on a fast track to hell

— Whenever the Rapture is referred to in the NT, a note about how it should comfort the believer is always included (John 14:1; here; Titus 2:13)

- Which Rapture view is a comfort to the believer?

— It certainly isn't the mid-Tribulational view, because the believer will have to go through 42 months of hell on earth (the Bowl and Trumpet judgments) before the Rapture takes place

— It certainly isn't the Pre-Wrath/Three-Quarters Rapture view, because the believer will have to go through ~63 months of hell on earth (even though that is not the beginning of God's wrath, as they believe)

— And it certainly isn't the Post-Tribulational view because at that point, after 7 years of Tribulation/hell on earth, what is the point of the Rapture happening five minutes before the Second Coming?

— If you put the Church in the Tribulation, on the earth while Jesus is in heaven opening the seven-sealed scroll and terrifying judgments are coming one after the other, this provides absolutely no comfort to the believer at all.

— The hope of a Rapture after a literal time of great tribulation would be little comfort to the Thessalonian believers

— However, rather than being frightened by events preceding the Second Coming of the Lord, we are to be comforted as we anticipate the coming of the Lord for His own

Although the Church has gone through periods of great persecution in the past and undoubtedly may go through greater and even more intense persecutions before Christ

returns, nevertheless, the view of a post-Tribulational Rapture is impossible for the simple reason that it makes meaningless the very argument that Paul was presenting in the Thessalonian letters. Paul was arguing for the imminence of Christ's return. This is to be the major source of comfort for suffering believers. If Christ will not come until after the Great Tribulation then the return of the Lord is not imminent and tribulation rather than deliverance is what we must anticipate.

Evidence in 1 Thess 4:13-18 for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture [Rapture, Pre-Tribulation](#)

1. The passage pictures the Rapture as an imminent event, but it is not *imminent* if the Tribulation—which will be a recognizable and specific time period starting with Antichrist's signing of a seven-year peace treaty with Israel—must come first (Cf. 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 1:10; James 5:8-9).
2. Christians are not destined to experience the outpouring of God's wrath (Rom 5:9; 8:1; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9-10; Titus 2:13; Rev 3:10), which the Tribulation will include.
3. The prospect of an imminent Rapture is a much greater comfort than the prospect of a post-Tribulation Rapture, and Paul revealed this information to provide comfort (John 14:1; 1 Thess 4:18; Titus 2:13).
4. There is no mention of the Tribulation in the passage, but that would be appropriate, expected, and reasonable if it will precede the Rapture.
5. The biblical descriptions of the Rapture and Second Coming are quite different, which precludes them happening together.
6. The pre-Tribulation view existed in the Early Church long before John Nelson Darby (1800-1882 AD) popularized it.

Seven Additional Arguments Favoring the Pre-Tribulational View

1. The purpose of the Tribulation concerns Israel, not the Church (Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24)
2. No biblical reference to the church on earth during the Tribulation period (Rev 4-19)
3. The church is promised an exemption from divine wrath (Rom 5:9; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rev 3:10; 6:17)
4. The Rapture is imminent (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:15)
5. The Rapture is a comfort to believers (John 14:1; 1 Thess 4:18; Titus 2:13)
6. The Antichrist cannot come to power until the Restrainer is removed (2 Thess 2:6-7)
7. Symbolic parallels (2 Peter 2:5-9)

For details on all seven arguments, see:

[Rapture 05 When is the Rapture? - Part 1 \(Jer 30:7\).](#)

[Rapture 06 When is the Rapture? - Part 2 \(Jer 30:7\).](#)

[Rapture 07 When is the Rapture? - Part 3 \(Rev 4:4\).](#)

Rapture 08 When is the Rapture? - Part 4 (Rev 6:16-17).

Rapture 09 When is the Rapture? - Part 5 (Phil 3:20).

Rapture 10 When is the Rapture? - Part 6 (2 Thess 2:6-7).

Rapture 11 When is the Rapture? - Part 7: Symbolic Parallels (Luke 17:26-30).

If the Thessalonians had believed that the church would be going through the Tribulation they would have rejoiced that some of their brethren had missed this period of suffering and were with the Lord without experiencing the outpouring of wrath. These Christians evidently believed that the church would not go through the Tribulation and in their anticipation of the return of Christ mourned for their brethren, whom they thought had missed the blessing of this event. [Pentecost]

The Promise

John 14:1-3:

- 1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
- 2 In My Father's house are many rooms; if *that* were not so, I would have told you, because I am going *there* to prepare a place for you.
- 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, *there* you also will be.

A comparison of 1 Thess 4:13-18 with John 14:1-3 shows that they refer to the same event:

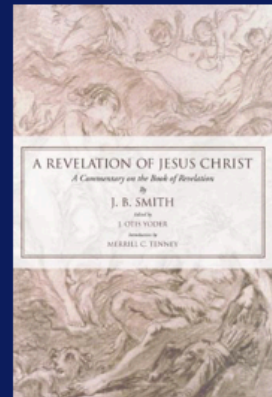
Parallels Between John 14:1-4 & 1 Thess 4:13-18

JOHN 14:1-4	1 THESS 4:13-18
"trouble" (v1)	"sorrow" (v13)
"Believe" (v1)	"believe" (v14)
"God, me" (v1)	"Jesus, God" (v14)
"told you" (v2)	"say to you" (v15)
"come again" (v3)	"coming of the Lord" (v15)
"receive, you" (v3)	"caught up" (v17)
"to myself" (v3)	"to meet the Lord" (v17)
"be where I am" (v3)	"ever be with the Lord" (v17)
J. B. Smith, <i>A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation</i> , 311-13	

J. B. Smith

A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961), pp. 312-13.

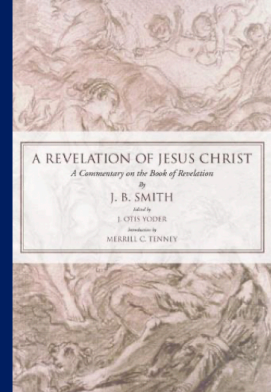
"The words or phrases are almost an exact parallel. They follow one another in both passages in exactly the same order. Only the righteous are dealt with in each case. There is not a single irregularity in the progression of words from first to last. Either column takes the believer from the troubles of earth to the glories of heaven."



J. B. Smith

A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961), pp. 312.

“Hence it is impossible that one sentence or even one phrase can be alike in the two lists...And finally not one word in the two lists is used in the same relation or connection...It would be difficult if not impossible to find elsewhere any two important passages of Scripture that are so diverse in the words employed and so opposite in their implications.... We believe the comparison of the words of these two passages...describe different events.”



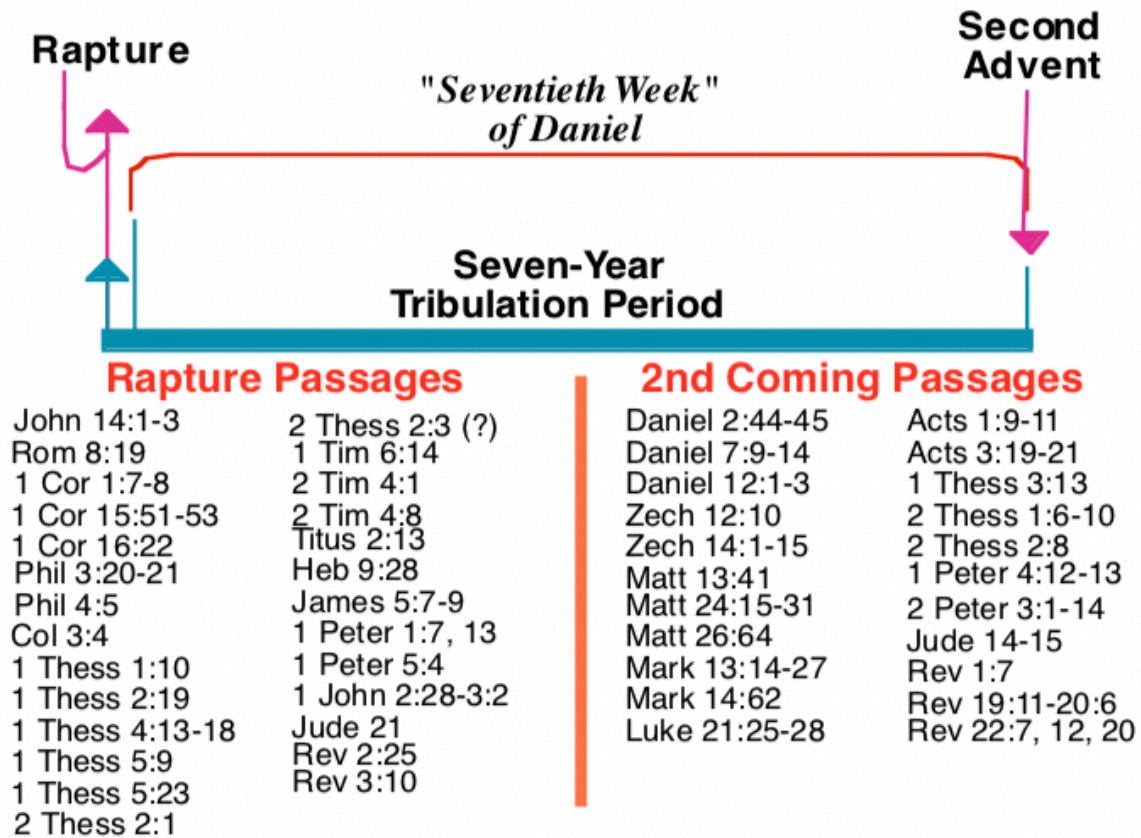
A similar comparison of 1 Thess 4:13-18 with Rev 19, which describes the Second Coming, reveals that these two passages must describe different events:

1 THESSALONIANS 4	REVELATION 19
Only the righteous are in the picture.	Only the wicked.
The dead are raised to life.	The living go to death.
The saints ascend to meet the Lord.	Saints descend with the Lord.
They are the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb.	They constitute the supper of the great God.
They are forever with the Lord.	The leaders and all their followers are cast into the lake of fire.

Rapture vs Second Coming: Two Distinct Events

Many today take Rapture passages and Second Coming passages together, and ignore the details included in each. Most take specific Rapture passages and attribute them to the Second Coming, even though they blatantly contradict other Second Coming passages. Christians believe Jesus is coming back, but they don't realize He'll coming back in "phases." The Rapture is a completely separate and different eschatological event than the Second Coming. We know this because of the way Scripture describes each event.

RAPTURE & SECOND COMING PASSAGES



A number of significant differences are found in the description of the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ:

1. At the Rapture, Jesus comes *for* His own [Church Age believers]; at the Second Coming Jesus comes *with* His own.
2. At the Rapture, Jesus comes only in the air (1 Thess 4:17); at the Second Coming Jesus comes to the earth (Rev 19:11-18).
3. At the Rapture, living saints receive resurrection bodies (1 Thess 4:17); at the Second Coming, no living believers receive resurrection bodies.
4. At the Rapture, translated saints go to heaven; at the Second Coming translated saints go to earth.
5. At the Rapture, Jesus comes in the air and returns to heaven (John 14:3); at the Second Coming Jesus establishes His kingdom on the earth.
6. At the Rapture, there is no judgment on the unsaved upon the earth; the Second Coming concludes God's judgments on the earth dwellers.
7. At the Rapture, Christ claims His bride; at the Second Coming Christ comes with His bride.

8. The Rapture delivers the saints from the wrath to come; the Second Coming concludes the wrath to come (Daniel's 70th Week).
9. The Rapture is imminent and its proximity is not announced by any prophetic signs; the Second Coming is preceded by specific, recognizable signs.
10. The Rapture involves only the saved of the Church Age; the Second Coming involves all on the earth. The saved of the OT are resurrected after the Second Coming.
11. The Rapture is not mentioned in the OT; the Second Coming is predicted often in the OT.
12. Satan is not mentioned in reference to the Rapture; after the Second Coming, Satan is bound (Rev 20:2-3).
13. No prophecy must be fulfilled before the Rapture; many prophecies must be fulfilled before the Second Coming.
14. At the Rapture only those who meet Him in the air will see Him; at the Second Coming every eye shall see Him.
15. The Rapture is called the Day of Christ (Phil 1:10; 2:16); the Second Coming comes as part of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:31-32; 1 Thess 5:2).

RAPTURE DISTINCT FROM SECOND COMING	
RAPTURE (1 Thess 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:51-57)	SECOND COMING (Rev 19:11-16)
Christ comes in the air (1 Thess 4:16)	Christ comes to the earth (Zech 14:4)
For His saints (1 Thess 4:15-17)	With His saints (Rev 19:14)
Blessing (1 Thess 4:18)	Judgment (Rev 19:15)
Effects only believers (1 Thess 4:16)	Effects both believers and unbelievers (Rev 19:15)
Invisible (1 Thess 4:16)	Visible to all (Rev 1:7)
Announced only by an archangel (1 Thess 4:16)	Involves myriads of angels (Jude 14)
Resurrection (1 Cor 15: 51)	No resurrection
Rescue of the church (1 Thess 1:10)	Rescue of Israel (Matt 23:37-39)

The two different aspects of our Lord's return are clearly delineated in Scripture. The only real issue is the interval of time between the two comings.

"Raptures" in Scripture

1. Enoch (Gen 5:42; Heb 11:5)
2. Elijah (2 Kings 2:1,11)
3. Jesus (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rev 12:5)
4. Philip (Acts 8:39)
5. Paul (2 Cor 12:2-4)

6. Body of Christ (1 Thess 4:17)

7. John (Rev 4:1)
8. Two Witnesses (Rev 11:12)

The Doctrine of Imminency [Doctrine of Imminency](#)

- Imminent: next expectation; believers are taught to expect the Savior from heaven at any moment (Phil 3:20; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:18; 5:6; Rev 22:20)
 - Not be confused with "immanent," that God is not only transcendent, or far above us, but that He is always with us and active on our behalf
 - Nor should it be confused with "eminent" which is a title of honor reserved for persons of outstanding distinction
- Imminency expresses hope and a warm spirit of expectancy (1 Thess 1:10)
- It should result in a victorious and purified life (1 John 3:2-3)
- Paul seemed to include himself among those who looked for Christ's return before his death (1 Thess 4:15,17; 2 Thess 2:1)
- Timothy was admonished to "keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim 6:14)
- Jewish converts were reminded that "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37)



Donald Grey Barnhouse

Cited in Mark Hitchcock, "An Overview of Pretribulational arguments,"
online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 27 August 2013, 29-30.

"Jesus may come today, Glad day! Glad day!
And I would see my friend;
Dangers and troubles would end If Jesus should come today.
Glad day! Glad day! Is it the crowning day?
I'll live for today, nor anxious be, Jesus, my Lord, I soon shall see;
Glad day! Glad day! Is it the crowning day?"



Donald Grey Barnhouse

Cited in Mark Hitchcock, "An Overview of Pretribulational arguments,"
online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 27 August 2013, 29-30.

By way of parody, Dr. Barnhouse also pointed out that if the mid-trib or post-trib advocates sang this song, it would instead have to say:

"Jesus can't come today, Sad day! Sad day! And I won't see my friend; Dangers and troubles won't end Because Jesus can't come today. Sad day! Sad day! Today is not the crowning day? I won't live for today, and anxious I'll be, The Beast and the False Prophet I soon shall see, Sad day! Sad day! Today is not the crowning day?"