

1 ***Rapture: where do we go when we die?***

The Church at Thessalonica was full of *new converts*. It had only been in existence for about 1 yr. On Paul's 2nd missionary journey he spent three Sabbath's there & a church planted. Some Jews from the synagogue were saved, & many Gentiles along w/ a number of leading women of the town were converted. A riot broke out Paul & his companions were escorted out of town by night. A number of months had passed & Paul was concerned about the new believers, so he sent Timothy back to check on them, to see how they were doing & encourage them in the faith.

Timothy reported back to Paul about their progress in the Lord but confusion had arisen about his teaching--misunderstanding over end times events & what happens to loved ones who die before Christ return. *Earl Thirty seven--hundred dollar bills*

Timothy might have said, *'Paul, remember when you were teaching the new converts about Christ's soon return to set up His Kingdom. How you were exhorting them to be ready because Jesus could come back at any time. It could be in the day, at night, early morning or late evening. You told them to live in a state of expectancy of the Lords return.*

You told them *when He does come He will change our bodies to be like His, glorified. And in that condition we will live and reign w/ Him.* Well, Paul some of the saints are worried about their Christian friends that have died after you left. Some died accidentally, others were martyred by pockets of Roman persecution, still others died of natural causes. These baby Christians are stressing out because they think those who have died are going to miss out on the kingdom.

2 ***Rapture: where do we go when we die?***

Maybe he was teaching on *Micah 4:3... they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war.*

Isa 11:6-9 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (NKJ)

They were expecting the return of Christ at any time & figured those who had died would not have the privilege of living w/ Jesus in the Kingdom. So some felt sorrow, bummed out at the prospect that their loved ones who died would miss out on this glorious experience.

Paul is going to clarify his teach & tell them that their sorrowing is unwarranted. In fact Jesus Himself said *'Let not your heart be troubled....John 14:1.*

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

It's the difference between those who have hope & those who don't.

1 Pet 1:3,4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable & undefiled & will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you

To die w/o Christ is to have no hope and to face a Christ-less eternity. But to live and believe is to never die, never be separated--because He lives we too shall live, even if we die.

3 ***Rapture: where do we go when we die?***

1Thes 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

Believers do not grieve like non-believers. As Christians we grieve for those who die in Christ because we will miss them, but they are where we long to be. We grieve for us, but we rejoice for them, that they are w/ the Lord. The worlds grief is because of the finality of it all, they have no hope in the resurrection of Christ so their sorrow is the desperate, ultimate end to life.

Mel Blanc creator of Porky Pig his tombstone reads *'That's all folks'*. To leave this life is eternal separation from God for the non-believer but for Christians it is the entrance into life, the beginning of eternal life w/ Christ and our loved ones who have gone before us.

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.

The reason we do not sorrow as the rest? Resurrection! It turns sorrow into expectation.

1 Cor 15:17-20....if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

The fact of the resurrection is indisputable. And because of this fact Jesus will bring with Him all born again believers who have gone before us. Jesus said I will be crucified but I will rise again. **John 14:19 "After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also.**

4 **Rapture: where do we go when we die?**

So Christ's resurrection gives us hope & changes worldly sorrow into expectancy as if we waited for a loved one to come home from a long journey. Except we are the ones on the journey & our loved ones are home, & we too will soon be home.

1 Cor 15:55-57 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has taken the sting out of death, it is only temporary separation, until permanently reunited at His coming.

Paul says our loved ones come back w/ Him when He comes for the Church. So they don't miss out

Also He declares those who sleep in Christ are w/ Christ. **2 Cor 5:6,8 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord....I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord**

Paul was torn between two worlds---

Phil 1:21-24 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Paul says the earth and this body are not our permanent home--

2 Cor 5:1-4 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Paul had a taste of heaven when he had a pre-rapture experience.

2 Cor 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

5 ***Rapture: where do we go when we die?***

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, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

God's word to us, take it to heart, He's good to His promises. A generation of Christians will be alive when Christ returns for His church. Paul says we will not precede or go before the sleeping saints, they will not be left out. In fact it is the other way around, they have gone before us. Paul now describes the sequence of events when the rapture takes place.

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 shall rise first.

It is a shout of victory **(dead raised to everlasting life)** *1 Cor 15:52 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**.*

al las so --to make different, to exchange one thing for another. *1 Cor 15:53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

So the dead in Christ will come back w/ Jesus & at the same time He will raise their bodies into an incorruptible state—so that spirit & soul meet resurrected body and their eternal state is complete for the dead in Christ.

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

Then those in the church who are born again believers will join them (be caught up) in the clouds. *Twinkling of an eye*...is an instantaneous period of time

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This is not the second coming. First He comes for His saints in the clouds at the rapture, then He comes w/ His saints to the earth at the second coming.

There will be an interval of at least seven years between Rapture & the second coming. We will be in heaven at the marriage supper of the Lamb Rev 19.

Dan 9:24-27 "Seventy weeks (490 years) have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.

25 *"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (483 years); it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.*

26 *"Then (after the sixty-two weeks the) Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.*

March 14, 445 BC Artaxerxes decree Nehemiah 2 --173,880 days Ap 6 32 AD

27 *"And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week (7 yrs), but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."*

*Dan 12:10-12 "Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. "And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the abomination of desolation is set up, {there will be} 1,290 days. "How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! **Eastman/Smith The Search for Messiah***

God told Daniel to seal up the vision it is for the last days—Jesus said understand the prophecy of Daniel—Sir Rbt Anderson The Coming Prince

Ps 102:16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. (KJV)

First the Rapture then the second coming. Some say Rapture is not in the bible. Which bible? Greek bible is *harpazo* – *to snatch out, pluck up, forcibly take away, to seize vigorously*. Latin Vulgate render *harpazo* to Lat word *Raptus*--which is transliterated *Rapture*.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.