

## 4. T = Thessalonians

The book of Thessalonians is probably the most defining book on the Rapture. Specifically, 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul had spent three weeks at the church in Thessalonica. He shared with them about the coming of the Lord but many in that church began to get a little worried when loved ones passed away. They wondered if they had missed out on the coming of the Lord.

So Paul writes to talk to them about the Rapture and more so to encourage them regarding this blessed hope.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**, *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

Paul speaks of the resurrection of the saints at this time. Those that have died in faith (which is who Paul is referring to when he talks of *those who have fallen asleep* – vs. 4. Just in case you thought that was referencing the Sunday spirit of slumber that hits many of you in church) aren't going to miss out on anything. In fact Paul reveals that their souls are with Jesus right now and when the rapture occurs Jesus is going to bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus (those that have already died with a faith in Jesus). Their soul will then be reunited with a resurrected body that will be made for heaven. And then we'll be caught up to meet them in the air. The great reunion! Only this reunion will not be discouraging like our reunions today where we look at one another and see how

bad time has been to us. We're going to be putting on a new body – a perfect body!

- This is what Paul speaks of in **1 Corinthians 15:51–54**, *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory.""*

So, when Paul says to comfort one another with these words, it's regarding the dead believers not missing out on anything, and it's in the context of the Rapture – our blessed hope! So be comforted today.

Notice, Jesus is going to descend from heaven with a shout and with the trumpet of God. Trumpet calls had a few different uses as seen in the Bible:

- Declare war
- To gather God's people
- Roman's blew trumpets to announce the arrival of an important person

Some have confused this trumpet with those in Revelation 8-11. Yet in Revelation they are trumpets blown by angels, this one is the trumpet of God. Before the last 3 trumpets sound in Revelation, an angel announces, *'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpets of the three angels who are about to sound!'* (**Revelation 8:13**). Whereas in Thessalonians , it's not woe, but whoah! We're out of here! So the message is comfort one another!

T – Thessalonians (these are comforting words for the church)

## 5.U = Urgency / Imminency

The Bible teaches the imminent return of Jesus. This means it's something that could happen at any time. There is nothing that needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture takes place.

If we don't have a rapture, then we don't have an imminent return of Jesus. If we were to go through the Tribulation then we'd have a pretty good idea when the Lord was coming again. We'd know we were in that last 7 year period and when

that peace treaty comes at the hands of the Antichrist we'd begin to have our countdown calendars ready. In other words, it wouldn't so much be an imminent return. Jesus Himself said:

- **Matthew 24:42**, *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*
- **Matthew 25:13**, *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

With the rapture, we are looking for Jesus, not looking for the antichrist:

- **1 Corinthians 1:7**, *"so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,"*
- **Philippians 3:20**, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,"*

Going back to what we looked at in 1 Thessalonians 4, people had such an expectation at the Lord's any moment return, that they were a little shocked that their loved one's passed on. They were all expecting to see Jesus before anything happened to them. So Paul had to comfort them in the reality of what was going to happen, that they weren't going to miss out on anything. Jesus is coming again and it could happen at any moment.

I find living with that expectation and anticipation of the Lord's return is comforting. Though we face trials in this world, I keep going, we can keep going excitedly because at any moment, Jesus is going to be calling us home to be with Him forever. Stop focusing in worry with what is to come in this world, and start focusing worshipfully in Who is coming that is out of this world.

U – Urgency/Imminency (we're awaiting Jesus; not the antichrist. Nothing needs to happen before the Rapture of the church).

Regarding the arrival of the Antichrist, let's look at our next point.

## 6. R = Restrainer

Paul says something very interesting in 2 Thessalonians 2.

**2 Thessalonians 2:5–8**, *"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup> And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;*

*only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."*

Paul is speaking of the revealing of the antichrist (lawless one). And this person won't be revealed until that which is restraining is removed. Notice the **He** is capitalized in vs. 7. I believe this is speaking of the Holy Spirit, and more so, the Holy Spirit in the church. At the rapture, the church will be removed and the Holy Spirit's influence through the church will be gone. This will open the way for the antichrist to come onto the scene.

- We can often think that we're a ways away from the Tribulation That there's a lot of things that will need to happen for the implementation of the various antichrist systems to be in effect. But can you imagine how fast things are going to develop with the reaction and response to millions of people suddenly disappearing at the Rapture. This is going to necessitate a global response and partnership which a global leader will be more than happy to step in and accommodate.

This chapter interestingly also states at the beginning:

**2 Thessalonians 2:1–4**, *"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*

That term "falling away" is *apostasia* in the Greek. It's transliterated as apostasy, but it also has a second meaning. It can also mean a departure. Early English Bible translations translated this word as so.

- Now we know that in the end times many will depart from the faith, but in the context that Paul is speaking of, this word falling away fits well with the departure of the church at the Rapture and the removal of the restraining force of the Holy Spirit in the church.

There is a definite article in front of "falling away" and in front of "man of sin". In other words Paul is specifying *THE* falling away, and *THE* man of sin.

- "By providing these two definite articles essentially Paul is indicating that the apostasy will be something that has specific, time bound-qualities just like

the man of sin's coming has such qualities. In other words, just like the advent of the man of sin will be specific and an instantaneous event in future history, the coming *apostasia*, or departure, will similarly be specific and time bound." (Andy Woods, "The Falling Away")

R – Restrainer (2 Thess. 2:1-8. Falling away = apostasia (departure))

### 7.E = Exempt from the Tribulation

Lastly, God has not appointed us to go through His wrath or judgment. And that's what the Tribulation is. It is a period of time where God pours out His judgment on a Christ rejecting world. And through it He will bring Israel to a place of repentance, and anyone else that is ready to repent and turn to Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9**, *"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"*

**1 Thessalonians 1:10**, *"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."*

**Revelation 3:10**, *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."*

**Romans 5:9**, *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*

Remember when Abraham was pleading with God to spare Sodom for the sake of his nephew Lot and his family. Abraham God to spare the city if there were 50 righteous there. God said He would. Then Abraham thought maybe he started to high. He keeps negotiating, down to 10 righteous people. And indeed God would. However, there weren't 10 righteous there, but what did God do? He delivered Lot and his family out of the city. He doesn't judge the righteous with the wicked.

And thank the Lord, our sin has been judged on the cross of Calvary. Jesus has paid the penalty for our sin. We don't have to face another judgment of God. It's paid in full – praise the Lord. So when God does judge the world during the Tribulation, we too will be delivered – raptured.

- Some say this is just escapism. I say, *Yup, your point!?*

- I'm not sure if these people are just hoping to go through the Tribulation or not? And we do know that as believers today we're not exempt from trials or tribulation. The Bible says we will face these things:
- **2 Timothy 3:12**, *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*
- **John 16:33**, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*
- The difference is these are not tribulations from God, but rather tribulations as a result of a fallen world.
- The Tribulation to come is something very different than what we see today. And I'm thankful that I don't have to imagine having to go through the Tribulation to come. It would be like a husband taking a bride and saying, I'm going to make your life so unbearable. A man takes a bride to protect her not abuse her.
- The Rapture is a blessed hope for us and something that causes us to live expectantly, excitedly, and evangelistically.

E – Exempt from the Tribulation (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 5:9; Abraham and Sodom).