



## The Blessed Hope

*Adapted from FireBible Article: The Rapture by Danny Duvall*

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the church.<sup>1</sup>

*The Rapture* article gives a deeper understanding of this truth:

**1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.

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The word “rapture” comes from the Latin work *raptu*, which means **caught** away or **caught up**.

This event described here and in 1 Corinthians 15, refers to the time when Christ will take his followers from the earth to meet him in the air and to be with him in heaven. It involves only those who are part of Christ’s **true** church, his faithful followers worldwide, who are in a right relationship with him.

1. Just **prior** to the rapture, as Christ is descending from heaven for his church, the resurrection of the “dead in Christ” will occur.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)** 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.

This is **not** the same resurrection which is an event occurring after Christ returns to earth, destroys the forces of the antichrist and confines Satan to the bottomless pit.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Blessed Hope,” The Assemblies of God, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Statement-of-Fundamental-Truths#13> (Accessed August 28, 2017).

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**Revelation 20:4 (ESV)** Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The resurrection in Revelation 20:4 relates to those who turned to Christ and died for their faith in him during the **tribulation** (i.e., the period following the rapture, during which the antichrist will rise to power and God will execute his severe end-time judgments on the earth.)

2. At the same time as the dead in Christ rise, followers of Christ who are alive on earth will be transformed, their bodies becoming **imperishable** and immortal. This will happen in an instant, “in the twinkling of an eye.” The word is ‘atomo,’ a measure of time that cannot be **divided**.

**1 Corinthians 15:51–52 (ESV)** <sup>51</sup> 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed.

3. Both the resurrected Christians and those who are instantly transformed will be caught up **together** to meet Christ in the air (i.e., in the atmosphere between earth and heaven).
4. They will be **visibly** united with Christ, taken to heaven, and reunited with loved ones who died knowing Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
5. They will be removed from all **suffering** and distress (2 Cor. 5:2, Phil. 3:21), from all persecution and oppression, and from the entire realm of sin and death (1Cor. 15:51-56). The rapture also **rescues** Jesus’ followers from “the coming wrath” – the Great Tribulation.
6. The hope that our Savior will soon return to take us out of the world to “be with the Lord forever” is The Blessed Hope of all who have entrusted their lives to Christ. It is a major source of **comfort** for suffering Christians.

**Titus 2:13 (ESV)** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

7. Paul uses “we” in 1Thessalonians 4:17 because he believed the Lord’s return could have happened in his own lifetime, and he communicated this same sense of **urgency** and anticipation to the Thessalonians. The Bible insists that Christ’s followers in all time periods must remain alert and ready for the Lord’s return.

**Romans 13:11 (ESV)** Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

8. Those who claim to be Christians and part of the church, yet are unfaithful to Christ and do not truly have a personal saving **relationship** with the Lord will be left behind. **(Read: Matthew 25:1-13 ESV)**

They will be left with only a **false** system of religion **(Read: Revelation 17:1-18 ESV)** and will experience God’s wrath during the tribulation period.

9. Following the rapture is “the **day** of the Lord,” referring to a time that brings distress and judgment on the ungodly (Read: **1 Thessalonians 5:2-10 ESV**). That will be followed by the second stage of Christ’s coming, when he literally returns to earth at the end of the tribulation to defeat the forces of the antichrist, destroy the ungodly and reign on earth for a thousand years at the end of time as we know it.

**Matthew 24:42 (ESV)** Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 (ESV)** and answer the following from the *FireBible* study notes:<sup>2</sup>

- To which event do these verses refer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does the phrase “caught up in the clouds” refer?

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<sup>2</sup> Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 274.

- How does the doctrine of the Rapture encourage us?

Read the *FireBible* article: *The Rapture*. Answer the following:<sup>3</sup>

### **What is the Rapture?**

1. How is the resurrection of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 different from the resurrection of Revelation 20:1-4?
2. What will happen to believers who are alive on earth when Jesus returns?
3. What will happen to all believers – those who have died and those on earth – when Christ returns?
4. What are some blessings that believers receive at the Rapture?
5. We refer to the return of Christ for us as the Blessed \_\_\_\_\_.
6. When should we expect the Lord to return?

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<sup>3</sup> Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 275.

