

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ: Bridegroom to the Clouds**  
**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

Last time...holy living before God and man i.e. basic Christian principles to live a life pleasing God in the anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ

This time...a mystery being further revealed – the return of the Lord Jesus Christ

1. as the Bridegroom and Redeemer
2. to the clouds
3. for His Bride (purchased with His blood)
4. to keep His promise to His disciples (John 14:1-3)
5. no man knows when (Matt 24:36, 42)

A very sudden and surprising event known as “The Rapture”, a revelation of God

Not to be confused with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ aka “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming”

1. as the Conquering King and Judge
2. to the earth
3. with His Bride
4. to set up His kingdom
5. man will know when (Dan 9:24-27); gathered to wage war against Him

The purposes of this letter to the church at Thessalonica are to

1. reassure the believers about the return of Jesus Christ
2. encourage the believers in their affliction to continue in the faith until then

The theme of the letter is the promised return of Jesus Christ

Thus far in the letter

Ch 1:9b-10	delivered <b>from</b> the wrath, before the wrath
Ch 2:19	no joy during the wrath, but before
Ch 3:12-13	when Jesus comes <b>with</b> His saints

In Ch 4, we see that the promised return of Jesus Christ

- is to inspire holy living...to please God (last week)
- is a mystery being further revealed, God telling His people what He is doing

The mysteries of God revealed to man in time

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets

To study the Scriptures, we interrogate the Scriptures:

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?

Then we search the Scriptures for the answers in order to rightly divide the Word of Truth; searching the very words of God, not words of man

This morning, in the prophetic Word of God, we will examine the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How about the return of Jesus Christ

Jesus, in His promise to His disciples, addressed the “Who?” and “What?”

John 14:1-3 The Lord Himself and His disciples  
The reunion of the Lord and His disciples

and in part revealed “Where?”

John 14:1-3 where I am there you will be also i.e. heaven

John 12:26 following Jesus there where He is so shall His servants

and did address “When?” but did not reveal it

Matt 24:1-3

Matt 24:36 Jewish wedding is a type/shadow

Matt 24:42

Matt 24:44

Also partially revealed in Scripture about this mystery as we “see thru a glass darkly” consulting the entire counsel of God

Ps 27:4-6

Where: in the house of the Lord

When: in the time of trouble

Is 26:20-21

Who: My people...the people of God

1 Peter 2:9-10 ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God

Where: your chambers...in the house of the Lord

What: hide

When: until the indignation be overpast i.e. before...

Why: The LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth

Is 57:1-2

Who: the righteous...Gen 15:6, 1 Cor 1:30

What: taken away from the evil/adversity/calamity/displeasure

Why: to enter into peace/rest

Zeph 2:1-3

Who: the meek of the earth (Matt 5:5, Matt 11:28-30)

What: hid in the day of the Lord's anger

When: before the day of the Lord's anger

Gen 5:22-24

Who: Enoch, a type of those who walk with God (Amos 3:3)

What: taken by God, translated/transported to not see death

(Heb 11:5)

Why: he pleased God (Heb 11:5-6)

**Gen 19:13-17** Who: Lot, a righteous man (2 Peter 2:6-9, Gen 15:6)  
 What: delivered by God  
 When: before the judgment of God (**Gen 19:22a**)  
 Why: God delivers the just (Hab 2:4) out of temptations and reserves the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished  
 How: taken by the hand, seized

#### Additional hints in Scripture

Dan 3      Who are the 3 young men in the fire (the type of Israel)?  
               Who is with them in the fire? (Dan 3:25)  
               Who and where is the “beloved” Daniel (a type of the Church)?

Ruth 3      Who is the Gentile woman (who proclaimed Ruth 1:16-17) at the feet of the kinsman-redeemer during the harvest (a metaphor for judgment)?

Gen 24      Who is “Eliezer” and what is he doing?  
               Where is the son?  
               Who are the son and bride types/shadows of?  
               Where do they meet? “Between” her home and his father’s house

So when we “shuffle” those Scriptures together to understand what God has revealed about the mystery of the return of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom for His Bride:

Who    My people...the people of God (Is 26)  
           the righteous (Is 57 and Gen 19)  
           the meek of the earth (Zeph 2)  
           those who walk with God (Gen 5)  
           the “beloved” (Dan 3)  
           the Son and His bride (Gen 24)  
           the redeemed (Ruth 3)  
           The Lord Himself and His disciples (John 14)

What    hide (Is 26)  
           hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger (Zeph 2)  
           taken away from the evil/adversity/calamity/displeasure (Is 57)  
           taken by God, translated/transported to not see death (Gen 5)  
           delivered by God (Gen 19)  
           the reunion of the Lord and His disciples (John 14)

Where    in the house of the Lord (Ps 27)  
           in your chambers...in the house of the Lord (Is 26)  
           “where I am there you will be also” i.e. heaven (John 14)  
           following Jesus there, where He is so shall His servants (John 12)  
           “between” the Bride’s home and The Father’s house (Gen 24)

Why to enter into peace/rest (Is 57)  
pleased God (Gen 5)  
God delivers the just out of temptations and reserves the unjust unto the  
day of judgment to be punished (Gen 19)  
LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth (Is 26)

When in the time of trouble (Ps 27)  
until the indignation be overpast i.e. before the indignation (Is 26)  
before the day of the Lord's anger (Zeph 2)  
before the judgment of God (Gen 19)  
"no man knows the day or the hour" (Matt 24)  
"at such an hour that you think not" (Matt 24)

How taken by the hand, seized (Gen 19)

But the picture is still incomplete, it is still a bit blurry because it is yet future

How?	How are we seized?
Where?	Where is "between our home and the Father's house"?
When?	When specifically?

So now we are given additional revelation about this mystery in 1 Thes 4

Why now?

John 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

When Jesus said this, before His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection,  
He would have absolutely blown the minds of the 11 if He told them the  
rest of "How?" and "Where?"

And...why is Paul bringing up this mystery in this letter?

v13 not be ignorant...them which are asleep:

Regarding the return of Jesus Christ, the Spirit- inspired Apostle Paul does not  
want the Church to be ignorant (without knowledge or understanding)  
about the status of "sleeping" believers in Christ who have died before the  
return of the Lord Jesus Christ

John 11:11-14 Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake  
him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep,  
he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but  
they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.  
Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

The believers of Thessalonica were well aware of Jesus' return, needing no instruction in this matter (Ch 5:1)

But apparently there was some sorrow for recently deceased believers/loved ones who "missed" the return of Jesus Christ.

What is the status of believers who have died before Jesus returns?

Paul desires to comfort them and to teach them to confirm their hope, a hope that unbelievers who perish (2<sup>nd</sup> death) do not have

v14 For if we believe:

The hope, the revelation Paul is about to share is for ALL who believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God Who died for their sins and rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to conquer the enemy of death (1 Cor 15:23)

ALL who believe will be present when Jesus returns...even those who died the 1<sup>st</sup> death but over whom the 2<sup>nd</sup> death has no power

John 11:25-26 **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die**

Believers who died before the return of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom for His Bride will return WITH Him

1 Thes 2:13

Eph 4:8...occupants/captives of Abraham's Bosom led into heaven when Jesus returned to the right hand of the Father

2 Cor 5:1-8 not yet revealed at the time 1 Thes is recorded

The believing dead have not and do not "miss out" on the Lord Jesus Christ's return!

v15 we say...by the word of the Lord:

Who said what Paul is recording?

Whose doctrine is this?

The LORD's, neither Paul's nor any other man's

The Word of the Lord...Gen 15:1 (1<sup>st</sup> mention) explained in John 1:1, 14

After John 12:26 and John 14:1-3 is John 14:4-6

John 16:12-15 fulfilling the hints in Gen 24

The Rapture of the Church is one of those "things to come" that Jesus did not fully reveal during His earthly ministry but is declared by the Holy Spirit our Guide, Teacher, and Comforter

we which are alive...shall not prevent them:

No man knowing the day or the hour when the Lord Jesus Christ will John 14:3  
should inspire holy living (1 Thes 4:1-12, [1 John 3:1-3]) because Jesus  
could return at any moment, imminently (vs “soon” or “immediately”)

What was the Apostle Paul’s expectation?

“we”...to be Raptured, to be alive and remaining here on earth when Jesus  
returned for His own

But, by the Word of the Lord, the alive will not precede the sleeping into glory  
The alive do not get a better deal than the sleeping  
And the sleeping do not miss out on anything!  
In fact, the sleeping have preceded the alive into the glory of the Lord!  
(2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:21-24)

v16-17 dead in Christ...alive and remain...caught up together with them:

When it is time for the Bridegroom to meet His Bride, Who comes?

The Bridegroom Himself, Personally

Not a substitute or a stand-in or an escort-angel

Now we are given more revelation about this mystery already partially revealed

“When?” when the Lord shouts

“Where?” in the clouds, in the air

“How?” caught up

“Why?” to meet the Lord and be with Him forever

The Lord Himself will descend from the right hand of the Father with a shout  
(a “cry of incitement”, to stir, or to urge on or to prompt to action),  
like

- the voice of the archangel (Michael)
- a trumpet

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and  
heard behind me a great voice, as of a  
trumpet...the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Rev 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was*  
opened in heaven: and the first voice which I  
heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking  
with me; which said, Come up hither, and I  
will shew thee things which must be  
hereafter

Signifying a gathering (Ex 19:13-14, Num 10:1-9 are hints)

Then the dead in Christ, the sleeping, shall arise/stand up first...  
having come with Jesus (v14)

Then the alive and remaining on earth will be  
caught up

- “seized”
- “plucked”
- “taken by force” (the force/power of God to do just this)
- *harpazo* in Greek
- *rapturo* in Latin (“Rapture” comes from the Latin)

together with them...the sleeping who preceded the alive into the glory of  
the Lord  
in the clouds...”in a cloud”

not to be confused with Acts 1:9-11 and Rev 1:7 and Rev 14:14-16

at the other return of Jesus Christ, as King and Judge

to meet the Lord in the air...to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Bridegroom

A “Family Reunion” that none will miss!

Right in the devil’s face! (Eph 2:2)

and so we shall be with the Lord...forever!

Just as He promised in John 14:1-3

v18     comfort one another:

With these words...by the Word of the Lord (v15)...comfort one another

Our sleeping loved ones have not and will not miss out on anything when  
Jesus Christ the Bridegroom returns to the clouds for His Bride!

The alive and remaining on earth will be snatched off the earth and reunited with  
them in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ before the wrath/judgment of  
God falls!

A “forever” Family Reunion!

Being with the Lord Jesus Christ forever!

Additional revelation regarding this mystery given to Paul later

1 Cor 15:51    Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,  
but we shall all be changed

2 Cor 12:1-4...during 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey (Acts 14:19-20)

Rom 5:9        saved from (“away, separate”, not thru) wrath through Him

Titus 2:11-14   our blessed hope at the glorious appearing of the great God  
and our Savior (from death and from wrath!) Jesus Christ

## **Application/Lessons**

This is an amazing revelation (Is 55:8-9) of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Bride!  
But...there is much ignorance, apathy, and confusion in the Church about it!  
Rightly dividing Dan 9:24-26 is essential

70 weeks of years (490 years)

determined upon

- thy people (Daniel's, the Jews)
- thy holy city (Jerusalem)

to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy

69 weeks (483 years) from the command to rebuild the city Jerusalem (Neh 2)  
to the coming of the Messiah (Triumphal Entry, Zech 9:9)

1 week that starts with a peace treaty between Israel (must be back in the land!) and the Antichrist, or which much is revealed in Rev 6-18, ending with Rev 19

Between the 69<sup>th</sup> Week and the 70<sup>th</sup> Week is an unspecified period of time when the Church (Jew and Gentile, whosoever will believe) is the witness of Jesus Christ on earth; we are living in this unspecified period of time that ends with...  
the Rapture

Teachings about the Rapture

1. Pre-Tribulational – the Rapture is BEFORE the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel
2. Mid-Tribulational – the Rapture is in the MIDDLE of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel
3. Post-Tribulational – the Rapture is at the END of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel
4. Pan-Tribulational – it is all going to pan out so pay no attention
5. A-Tribulation – there is no such thing as the Rapture

Scripture

- our Final Authority
- Scripture interpreting Scripture, the Author and not man interprets Scripture
- God's teaching/doctrine

tells us that the return of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom for His Bride happens BEFORE  
the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel



The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, and therefore the Word of the Lord, has been attacked as

1. a doctrine originated with John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren that became popular in USA in the early 1900s

False!

This is a revelation of God throughout Scripture, including this passage given by the Lord to the Church thru the Apostle Paul in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> Century

The Ancient Church Fathers, the disciples of the Apostles, spoke often of the Rapture and constantly reminded believers to look for the imminent return of the Lord

2. “wishful escape-ism”

Did Lot escape the wrath of God on S&G?

Do the Scriptures (Ps 27, Is 26, Is 57, Zeph 2, Gen 5) speak of the righteous escaping the indignation/anger of the Lord upon the unjust?

Regarding the days before His return did the Lord Jesus Christ say

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:36)?

What honor (John 12:26) is there in NOT escaping the wrath of God?

What does Gal 1:4 mean if the Church endures part or all of God’s wrath on the evil world?

Is there any comfort (1 Thes 4:18) if 1 Thes 1 1:9-10, 1 Thes 3:14-17, and 1 Thes 5:9-11 are not true?

Is there any comfort (for the alive and remaining) if the Rapture is either in the middle or at the end of the wrath of God falling on earth?

What generation of the Church has faced the wrath of Satan?

Every

What generation of the Church has faced the wrath of God?

None...so why would the last generation?

Yet, because the Rapture is future

- we still see thru a glass darkly
- we prophesy in part because we know in part

the Rapture is still a mystery...not fully revealed yet

Who is part of "Who"?

1 Thes 4:14-15a is true...so are

Matt 25:1-13 (Parable of the 10 Virgins)

Rev 2-3 (7 Letters to the 7 Churches)

The Rapture will be sudden...and it will be surprising!

Sudden and surprising in the moment in time

Probably surprising in Who

"You are here!"

"Hey, where is so-and-so?"

For God knows those who are His children and He knows how to deliver them out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:9)...whether sleeping/dead or alive and remaining

What will happen to **true believers** in Jesus Christ (v14) who believe the Rapture is in the MIDDLE of the wrath of God, the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel/Tribulation?

They will be raptured

When?

When Jesus shouts and seizes them up to the clouds before the wrath of God falls

What will happen to **true believers** in Jesus Christ who believe the Rapture is at the END of the wrath of God, the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel/Tribulation?

They will be raptured

When?

When Jesus shouts and seizes them up to the clouds before the wrath of God falls

What will happen to **true believers** in Jesus Christ who believe there is no Rapture or that everything will all pan out so they are apathetic about it?

They will be raptured

When?

When Jesus shouts and seizes them up to the clouds before the wrath of God falls

WHY?

Because God is faithful and cannot lie

Because Jesus will lose none the Father has given Him

When is the Rapture?

- No man knows the day or the hour
- Before the wrath/judgment of God falls

With the comforting truth of the Lord's imminent return, the world cannot discourage us!

Yet, the words of [Rom 13:11-14](#) have never been more true than they are today  
And, we know in part so we prophesy in part (1 Cor 13:9, 12)

Therefore, watch and be ready, looking for Him Who is perfect and will make all things known

Luke 21:28    *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up  
your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

Luke 21:36    *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to  
escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before  
the Son of man*

Rejoice in the God Who keeps His promises!

Is 25:8-9      He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away  
tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away  
from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*. And it shall be said in  
that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us:  
this *is* the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in  
his salvation.

Rev 3:8b, 10   *for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied  
my name.  
Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from  
the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them  
that dwell upon the earth.*