

The Rapture

Part 1 - First Thessalonians, chapter 4

1 Thessalonians 4 is the first scripture worth checking, because that's where the word "rapture" came from. It evolved from the Greek word for "caught up" in **verse 17**. When Jerome then translated the Bible into Latin from the Greek in the late 4th century, the Latin word he used for "caught up" was *rapiemur* (rah-pea-ay-mer) - which in English became the word *rapture*.

So from Greek to Latin to English, that's how 1 Thessalonians 4 evolved into 'The Rapture' as the term used to describe the moment when Jesus "comes down from heaven" to "raise the dead in Christ first" (16), and "After that we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** (*rapiemur*) with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (17).

These verses then took on a life of their own in the 1800's to paint *The Rapture* picture we have today of Jesus scooping up his saints just before all hell lets loose on this messed up planet, and off we go to heaven. Interpretations differ, however, as to **when** this rapture happens, **how** it happens, and **where** Jesus takes us to "be with him forever."

The most popular (and imagination grabbing) version of **WHEN** the Rapture happens is the "**Pre-Tribulation**" view, when Jesus raptures his saints away just before the terrible seven year Tribulation begins, so we escape the pain and suffering. That view is modified slightly by the "**Mid-Tribulation**" view that has Jesus rapturing his people at the midpoint of the seven year Tribulation. And then there's the "**Post-Tribulation**" view that has the church remaining on Earth throughout the seven years of Tribulation, suffering intense persecution, but being raptured by Jesus before he unleashes his final wrath on the wicked.

All three views agree that when Jesus arrives on Earth at the end of the Tribulation, that's his "Second Coming." Which is a bit awkward, though, because in both the "Pre" and "Mid" Tribulation views, Jesus has **already** come here **before** his Second Coming to rapture his saints away.

The awkwardness is explained away, however, by the second point - as to **HOW** The Rapture happens. In the “Pre” and “Mid” Tribulation views, Jesus comes **secretly** - no fanfare, just quietly whisking his people off the planet. So it’s not really a grand “Second Coming,” it’s just a brief intervention by Jesus sneakily done, without him even touching the ground. Nobody but the raptured saints see him.

That, however, is a bit awkward again, because if **1 Thessalonians 4** is the Scripture being used to describe a secret Rapture, then Jesus **isn’t** doing it quietly and sneakily without being seen. In **verse 16** he arrives “with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.” Which sounds far more like his Second Coming, when, “at the last trumpet” all the saints will be resurrected into imperishable eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

A third difficulty in 1 Thessalonians 4 is **WHERE** Jesus is taking his raptured saints. The prevailing Rapture view is that Jesus descends from heaven into our airspace (16) accompanied by all the saints who’ve died in the past (14), to join the living saints who rise up to “meet the Lord in the air” (17) - but **no mention** in those verses that he’s taking us back with him **to heaven** where we’ll be “with the Lord forever.”

There’s a hint as to where we’re going instead, though, in the Greek word for “**meet**” in **verse 17**. It’s *apantesin* (ap-orn-tay-sin), widely used back then for when a dignitary is visiting a city, and when word gets out that he’s on the way the residents pour out of the city to go and meet him. They then escort him **back into the city** as their honoured guest with great fanfare and celebration.

A grand illustration of that is in **Matthew 21**, when word gets out that Jesus is approaching Jerusalem and “a very large crowd” (8) come out to meet him, with some rushing ahead loudly announcing his coming (9), and with great fanfare and celebration they escort Jesus into the city. It pictures perfectly **Jesus’ triumphant return to Earth** at his Second Coming, being met in the air by his living saints, and then **continuing his descent to Earth** to rule as king forever, escorted by all his saints, and it’s here **on the Earth** that we’re with him forever, not heaven.

Using 1 Thessalonians 4 to prove The Rapture, therefore, is awkward, but what about Matthew 24?....(continues in Part 2)