

Filled To The Brim With The Fullness Of God

Acknowledging, Analyzing, & Applying God's Power For The Church

Recognizing What God Has Revealed To Us:

A Glimpse Toward The Future & A Gift of Encouragement

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 with additional biblical support

A Supplement To **Encourage** Additional Study
& **Enrich** Our Understanding Of God's Word

Some Relevant Statements About God's Promises For the Future

"The Rapture is the hope for the Christian. Unlike the 2nd coming, the Rapture is intended to be a comforting event for those who know Him. And, there is no event that needs to take place before His return. It can happen at any moment." —**Jack Hibbs**

"Over the past 30–40 years, the popularity of Bible prophecy within the Church has decreased. It's not easy to determine all the exact reasons for this, but it's evident that several Bible colleges & seminaries have changed their emphasis on prophecy because it can be relatively complicated. In the past few years, there's been a small, but distinct resurgence of interest in what the Bible says about the future because there are various global situations (& signs) that appear to be similar to some events predicted in the Bible, especially the Book of Revelations. It's beneficial for us to realize that Bible prophecy is intended to motivate us to live godly lives by revealing what God wants us to know—it's supposed to prepare us, not to scare us!" —**GAD**

"The Rapture of the Church is the next event on God's prophetic timeline. It is one of the great hopes of the Christian faith" —**David Jeremiah**

"Most Christians believe in the rapture. The issue is not whether there's going to be a rapture, the issue is when will it happen; will it be before the tribulation or after the tribulation? I believe teaches that it will take place before the Tribulation." —**Erwin Lutzer**

"The Rapture of the Church is a separate event from the Second Coming of Christ. The difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ is this: the Rapture is Jesus coming for his bride, while the Second Coming is Jesus coming with his bride. The rapture is a time when Jesus' followers will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds, receive a new body, and be reunited with departed believers." —**Greg Laurie**

"The Rapture is a key event, but it should never overshadow our primary focus on living a life pleasing to God. We should realize that it's very important to live as if Jesus could return at any moment, by remaining vigilant and focusing attention on our relationship with God."

—**David Jeremiah**

"The Rapture of the Church is a hopeful future event for believers, and as followers of Christ we are called to live lives that are worthy of meeting Jesus. We should be cautious about fixating on the timing of the Rapture, instead of focusing on being prepared spiritually. It's helpful to keep in mind that the judgment seat of Christ come soon after the Rapture, where our lives will be evaluated." —**Chuck Swindoll**

—Some Thoughts to Introduce This Week's Devotional Study:

—From Warren Wiersbe Expository Commentary on 1 Thessalonians:
"Jesus Christ will return in the air, and this is where we shall meet Him. Suddenly millions of people will vanish! One summer a church camp staged an elaborate *rapture* while the camp director was off the grounds. When he returned, everybody was missing, clothing was on the ground as though people had *passed through* it, a motorboat was circling on the lake without a pilot or passengers, and everything in the kitchen was functioning without a cook. A carefully timed phone call ('Hey, what's happening? Everybody's missing over here!') only added to the effect. 'I've got to admit,' said the director, 'it really shook me up for a minute.' Just think of what effect this event will have on a lost world!"

—This devotional is intended to inform us about what God has revealed to us about the future. As I stated in the statement included in the list of quotations, Bible prophecy can seem to be complicated, but if we take a close *step-by-step* approach, it's not as difficult as some suggest. It's vital that we take what the Bible says as the truth & avoid adding ideas or possible assumptions to what God has revealed to us. It's also necessary that we carefully harmonize what's presented throughout the scriptures, both Old Testament & New Testament, especially in Daniel 9, Matthew 24–25, John 14, Romans 9–11, Philippians 3, 1 Corinthians 15, Titus 2, 1 John 2–3, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Titus 2:11–15, & Revelation. Yes, that's a lot of territory to cover, but we can also rely on what various reliable Bible scholars have written. Our church library has some good resources & I can recommend several other books to read.

—1— Let's start by observing the background information & biblical context that helps us gain a better understanding to begin this study. Please read each passage listed with these points.

Recognizing the Biblical Context:

1. **John 14:1–6** = Jesus promise to His followers:

- I'm going away to prepare a place for My disciples!
- I'll come again & take you to be with Me!

2. **1 Thessalonians 1:9–10** = Paul's description about faithfulness:

- These readers had turned from idolatry to trust Christ!
- Jesus was resurrected & provides the rescue from God's wrath!

3. **Philippians 3:1, 20–21** = Paul explained why we can rejoice in the Lord:

- Our citizenship is in Heaven, from where Jesus will come for us!
- When He comes, He will transform us with glorified bodies!

Recognizing the Historical & Cultural Context:

—To the Greek (Thessalonian) culture

1. An archeological discovery in Thessalonica reads:

“After death, no reviving, after the grave, no meeting again.”

2. Prior to their conversion to follow the Lord:

- The concept of resurrection was foolish & impossible to them.
- Their conversion to Christ was a miraculous shift from idolatry!

Discussion or thought-provoking questions:

The Thessalonian culture was extremely influenced by idolatry. Also they were Greeks who believed in intellectually secular philosophy. For instance they followed Socrates who believed, “I was not, I became, I am not, I care not.”

—Looking at the way various people in our current culture look at life (abortion, moral {or immoral} & sexual & gender issues, selfishness, materialism, etc.), what role do we have in bringing necessary changes to our society?

—How should our hope & trust in God's promises encourage & motivate our desire to reach out with the Good News of Christ?

—Noting what Jesus told His disciples in John 14, how does that influence your outlook on life?

—What personal thoughts do you have about the reality that as Christ's followers, our citizenship is in Heaven?

—Honestly, what is the source of your hope?

—2— Please carefully read & observe 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, (we'll dig into 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 next week) 1 Corinthians 5:20–28, & John 11:17–27. Here are some helpful study notes from these passages.

“It's fair to say that more pretribulationists base their belief that the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation on 1 Thessalonians 4 than on any other one passage of Scripture. This passage also contains more detail about the Rapture than any other one. It has major significance. All conservative interpreters agree that the translation of living Christians and the resurrection of dead Christians will take place at the same time. Paul further stressed the truth of his teaching (in verse 14) by explaining that it was a revelation from the Lord, not just his opinion. Paul expected to be in the company of the living when Christ returned. He believed in an imminent Rapture, one that could take place at any time. The ‘coming’ (Greek = parousia, lit. “appearing”) of Christ is His appearing in the clouds (also see Acts 1:11). It is not His second coming following the Tribulation, the coming at which time He will remain on the earth, set up His earthly kingdom, and reign for 1,000 years (see Revelation 19:11-21). The differences in the descriptions of these comings present them as separate events.” —Notes from the NET Bible

—Based on your personal study & observation of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, what is revealed about the timing of the Rapture? How does Paul's explanation help us to see God's plan for this great event?

—In John 11:17–27, we read an important truth in 25–26 that can easily be missed if we fail to observe the details of what Jesus promised Martha. It seems that the resurrection Jesus is describing here is what will take place at the Rapture. He who is living at that time & has trusted in Christ as Lord & Savior will never die. That's what Paul is saying in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. How can we use this as an encouragement to a live godly life?

—In Titus 2:11–15, Paul describes the Rapture as “the blessed hope.” How does this passage provide us with a sense of security & comfort?

—Our proper response to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 should be to:

—Rejoice in the Lord!

—Reassure one another!

—Recognize God's sovereignty in the Signs of the Times!

What are some practical steps we can take to apply this to our daily lives?