

## **“RIGHT & READY”**

### ***Sunday Bible Study Series: “Ready or Not, Jesus is Coming” Studies in 1 Thessalonians***

#### **“THE RAPTURE”**

God has a policy of evacuating His people just before His destructive judgments fall (see Enoch, before the flood/ *Genesis 5:22-24*; and Lot, before the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah/ *Genesis 19:15-29*). Abraham understood this policy and reiterated it in prayer to God: “*Far be it from You (God)...to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (*Genesis 18:25*). Then God proceeded to evacuate Abraham’s nephew, Lot, just before blowing the sinful twin-cities into hell.

Someday God is going to judge the earth and purify it with flaming wrath prior to setting up His earthly kingdom (*2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Jude 14-15, Revelation 19-20, etc.*). This period of awesome judgment is called the Tribulation Period and is prophesied in detail in *Revelation 6-19*. But true to form, God’s Word indicates another evacuation of His people called ***the rapture*** (Latin term for ‘snatching away quickly’). *Titus 2:13* calls it *the blessed hope* and *1 Thessalonians 4:16-18* gives the details of our *lift off* and *travel arrangements*. The Thessalonians had been ***born again*** (Chapter 1); they grew and knew how to ***stand*** for the faith (Chapter 2); they knew how to *walk pleasing to God* (Chapters 3 & 4); now let’s see them get ready ***to fly worthy of God*** (*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*).

#### **Scripture Memory Verses**

##### **A Rapture Related Passage**

***“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed 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.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52***

In the Bible, the word ‘mystery’ always describes something previously unknown but now is very clear for the first time. In regard to ‘the rapture’ (the sudden evacuation of Church-Age believers from the earth), Paul was revealing it for the very first time in this passage. That means Jesus did not reveal anything about it in the gospels, nor did any other apostle write or teach on the subject, nor did any prophet predict it; it was a private secret (‘mystery’) of God until Paul revealed it to the Corinthians.

Through Paul, the Holy Spirit was showing that there will be a generation of believers just prior to the Tribulation Period who will be instantaneously called away from this world to the safety of heaven. Christians from the Church Age who have died are already with the Lord in a disembodied state (*2 Corinthians 5:1-8*) and are called *saints in light* (*Colossians 1:12*). They will get dressed in their resurrection bodies first (*1 Thessalonians 4:13-15*). An instant later, all living believers will also be miraculously transformed in their new resurrection bodies (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Philipians 3:20-21, etc.*). Then with everyone properly dressed in their formal resurrection apparel, we meet the Lord of the resurrection (*John 5:25-29*) in space at His ‘forever family reunion’ (*1 Thessalonians 4:17-18*).

#### **Meditation**

The rapture is no longer a mystery; it is the next prophetic event to happen. The only mysterious thing about it is who will be making the trip? If He comes today, are you right with God and ready to go?

#### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, praise You for purchasing my salvation at the cross. The real mystery is how You chose me to be saved and evacuated from the coming wrath. All I can do is thank You and serve You so I can eagerly anticipate the time of my departure into Your presence. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.

## **WHERE ARE THE LIVING DEAD?** ***What happens to Christians who die before the rapture?*** **(4:13-14)**

Their soul will accompany Jesus to be clothed with a glorified body when He returns. Therefore, their souls go to be with Him at death while their physical remains go dormant (sleep) until their resurrection day (the rapture) ending the Church Age that began at Pentecost (2 Corinthians 5:1-8, Philippians 1:23, Colossians 3:4, 2 Timothy 4:6, 2 Peter 1:14).

1. There is only eternal residence in heaven awaiting the souls of true followers of Jesus Christ. Hell awaits all others (*John 14:6*)
2. There is no *soul sleep* as the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists believe
3. There is no *limbo or purgatory* as the Catholics believe
4. There is no *reincarnation* as the Hindus believe
5. There is no *nirvana* as the Buddhists believe
6. There is no *state of non-existence* as atheists believe
7. There is no *state of ghostly existence* as animists believe
8. Everyone does not go to heaven as liberal Protestants believe
9. Everyone doesn't progress through heaven as Mormons believe

When non-Christians die, their bodies die and their souls go to hell awaiting final sentencing and eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire forever (*Revelation 20:11-15*). Hell is the place of judgment for the devil and his angels, but since people who reject Christ as the only way of salvation chose one of the devil's deceptions, their soul must go to the place of rejection. Hell is dark, hot, horrible and hopeless (*Mark 9:42-48*). The Lake of Fire is endless burning destruction because the soul is an indestructible part of man's personality and make-up (*Revelation 21:8*).

### **'The Upper-Taker'** ***(Ready for 'The Rapture' – The Believer's Blessed Hope)*** **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

#### **The 'Asleep in Jesus'** ***(The immediate destiny of souls upon death)***

***"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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."*** (also: 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23) **4:13-14**

#### **The 'Alive in Jesus'** ***(The imminent event, living believers anticipate)***

***"For this we say 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. 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."*** (also: 1 Corinthians 15:50-55, Colossians 3:4) **4:15-16**

#### **The 'Absent in Jesus'** ***(The immortal state of all who trust in Christ)***

***"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, shall we always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words."*** (also: John 14:1-3, Titus 2:11-14) **4:17-18**

According to Scripture all believers from the Church Age (Pentecost to the Rapture) will be taken away in merciful evacuation before the start of the 'Day of the Lord' (7-year Tribulation Period preceding Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming to earth - 1 Thessalonians 5). As the Tribulation begins on earth, believers will assemble to the Lord in the clouds for the Judgment Seat of Christ where rewards or loss thereof will happen (*Romans 14:10-12, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10*). Following the JSC, we will go on to heaven (*John 14:1-3*) where we will worship God until the Tribulation is over and it is time to accompany Christ to earth for His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and establishment of the kingdom of God on earth (*Revelation 19:6-20:6*). What a blessed hope is in store for all true disciples of the Lord!