



IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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In the Twinkling of an Eye

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2173

Rapture” means to be caught up or snatched away speedily; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 explores the sacred mystery of the Rapture, which is prophesied in the Book of Revelation.

“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 we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The central figure of this event is Jesus Christ, who is returning to rapture His church: “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” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

When Jesus descends with a shout, the dead in Christ rise first, then the living saints will be caught up to meet them in the air.

Adrian Rogers says, “If you have the same nature as Jesus Christ when He comes again, you’re the one going up, whether you’re beneath the ground or on top of the ground. If you’ve been Heaven-born, you will be Heaven-bound.”

This passage should be of comfort to us, knowing that we will meet Him in the air. We are assured of the rapture by the saving work of the Lord, which is the Gospel. We are also assured by the Word of the Lord, which is Scripture.

Though we don’t know the exact date when the rapture will occur, we know it is close and certain; it will happen “in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

There will be signs of the times; these don’t predict the Second Coming but simply affirm it will take place.

Though the “when” of the Rapture is a mystery, the “why” is clear; it is God’s divine strategy to rescue His Bride from the Great Tribulation to come. It is when we will reunite with our fellow Christians who have died, as we are all received by the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

After we are caught up in the air, the Bridegroom will take us, His Bride, to the place He has prepared for us.

Life Application

You can have peace in these treacherous Last Days if you keep your eyes on Jesus’ Second Coming; learn of it, live for it, long for it, and share it with others.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) When Jesus ascended after the resurrection, He promised that He would come again.
- b) The early Christians expected Jesus to return in their day at any moment.
- c) Since they expected Jesus to return in their lifetime, the Christians in Thessalonica were concerned that their loved ones, who had already died, might miss the Kingdom of God since they would not be living at the time of Christ's return.
- d) In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians to address this concern.
 - i) 1 Thessalonians 4:13
 - (1) There are three great enemies in this passage:
 - (a) Ignorance
 - (b) Sorrow
 - (c) Hopelessness
 - (d) This is what happens to those who do not understand Scripture.
 - (i) They are living in ignorance.
 - (ii) They are filled with sorrow.
 - (iii) They are living lives of despair and have no hope.
- e) The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4 about the rapture of the church.
 - i) The rapture will happen in the twinkling of an eye.
 - ii) The average person blinks their eyes 20,000 times a day.
 - (1) 20,000 times a day, Jesus may come.

2) WHAT - THE SACRED MYSTERY OF RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE (1 THESSALONIANS 4:16)

- a) The central figure in the resurrection and the rapture is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) Jesus Christ will one day step from His throne in Heaven and literally come back to the Earth with a shout.
 - i) This shout will raise the dead.
 - (1) At Jesus' command, Christians who have already died will rise from their graves or wherever they may have died.
 - ii) Then the living saints will be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:17
 - (a) This passage tells us that the Apostle Paul expected Jesus to return in his lifetime.
- c) The phrase "caught up" in 1 Thessalonians 4 is what we call "the rapture."
 - i) The word "rapture" comes from the Latin word "rapto" and the Greek word "harpazo."
 - (1) Both words mean "a catching away."
 - (2) We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
 - ii) The English word "rapture" is not found in the Bible.
 - (1) The English word "trinity" is not found in the Bible, nor is the English word "missions."



- (2) But the trinity, missions and the rapture are all taught in the Bible.
- iii) The Greek word “harpazo” is also used in the following passages:
 - (1) Acts 8:39
 - (a) Phillip was caught away; suddenly vanished.
 - (b) The usage of this word in this instance means “to catch away speedily.”
 - (2) John 6:15
 - (a) The word “to take by force” is the same word that in other places is translated “caught up.”
 - (b) This means that neither grave nor gravity will be able to hold us.
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 12:1
 - (a) The same word is used as “carried away.”
 - (b) In the rapture, we will be carried away; transported from one place to another.
 - (4) Acts 23:10
 - (a) The phrase “take him by force” is the same phrase we translate as rapture, and it means “to rescue from danger.”
 - (b) The rapture occurs, we will be taken by force, moved to a new place, and delivered from danger.
- d) Paul calls this a mystery.
 - i) 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
 - (1) We get our word “atom” from the word “moment” used in this passage.
 - (a) This denotes the most indivisible thing our language can describe.
 - (b) In the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ will rise first; and then we which are alive will be changed and caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.
 - ii) If we have the same nature as Jesus Christ, we will be caught away to meet Him in the air.
- e) How are we assured of these things?
 - i) By the saving work of our Lord; Jesus died and rose again.
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:14
 - (2) The Gospel itself is supernatural.
 - (3) God is not finished.
 - (4) God raised Jesus from the dead, and He will raise us.
 - (5) This same Jesus who came the first time literally and rose from the dead, is coming back the second time literally.
 - (a) The same Jesus that was born of a virgin.
 - (b) The same Jesus that walked on the water.
 - (c) The same Jesus that fed the 5,000.
 - (6) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is necessary to fulfill the purpose of God.
 - (a) The incarnation without the coronation would be like height without depth and east without west.
 - (b) Our salvation without our glorification is no salvation at all.
 - (7) His resurrection is the pledge of our resurrection.



- ii) By the sure Word of our Lord.
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:15
 - (2) There are all kinds of fortune tellers and seers and prognosticators, but only God knows the future.
 - (a) The devil does not know what will happen in the future.
 - (3) One-third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
 - (4) The first and last promise in both the Old and New Testaments deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

3) WHO - THE SAVIOR AND THE SAINTS (1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-17)

- a) There is a select multitude of the Savior and the saints.
 - i) The rapture is not a general resurrection.
 - (1) There is a first and a second resurrection.
 - ii) Only the dead in Christ will be raised at the rapture.
 - (1) Revelation 20:5-6
 - (a) The dead in Christ are the ones who will be raised; those in the first resurrection.
 - iii) There are only two ways to die: in Christ or out of Christ.
 - (1) If you are born twice, you will only die once.
 - (2) If you are born once, then you will die twice.
 - (a) Those who die twice will one day wish they had never been born at all.
- b) Just as there is not a general resurrection, there will also be no general rapture.
 - i) Not everyone on Earth will be caught up to meet the Lord.
 - ii) Only those who follow Jesus Christ will be caught away in the rapture.
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:17
 - (2) Luke 17:34-37
 - (a) These are the words of Jesus.
 - (b) There is a select multitude; not everyone will go.

4) WHEN - A SUDDEN MOMENT THAT IS CLOSE AND CERTAIN (1 CORINTHIANS 15:52)

- a) We are always living on the edge of eternity.
- b) The Bible says that the time is at hand, the Second Coming of Jesus is always close and it is always certain.
 - i) Revelation 1:3
- c) Paul was expecting Jesus to return in His day, and he was right.
 - i) Matthew 24:36
 - (1) If anyone gives a date as to when Jesus Christ will return, he is a liar.
 - ii) Matthew 24:38-39
 - (1) Some believe that the church will go through the Great Tribulation; this is not what Scripture says.
 - (2) The daily round of life will be occurring when Jesus Christ suddenly returns.



- iii) Matthew 24:42
- iv) Matthew 24:44
- v) 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
 - (1) The word "sleep" in this passage is a metaphor for a Christian who has died.
- d) We are not waiting for a sign to come to pass before the rapture can take place.
 - i) But signs do give indication that His return is nearing.
 - ii) We should always be ready for Jesus' return.
- e) The sounds of the rapture:
 - i) 1 Thessalonians 4:16
 - ii) The shout
 - (1) The shout is the Lord's voice Himself.
 - (a) Jesus called forth Lazarus with a shout.
 - (i) John 11:43
 - (2) When Jesus returns, He will give a shout, and the whole church will come forth.
 - (a) The shout is pointed primarily to the church.
 - iii) The voice of the archangel
 - (1) Archangel is the chief angel in charge of Heaven's armies.
 - (2) He is speaking primarily to Israel.
 - (3) After the church is taken out, God begins to move again with the nation of Israel, not just individual Jews as He does today.
 - (4) He will martial the angels in preparation for the Great Tribulation.
 - iv) The trump of God
 - (1) The trump deals primarily with Israel.
 - (2) After the church is raptured, God begins to assemble the nation of Israel for the last days.
 - (3) Numbers 10:9-10

5) WHY - A STRATEGIC MOTIVE OF RESCUE, REUNION AND RECEPTION (1 THESSALONIANS 4:17)

- a) The rapture is a rescue.
 - i) Before the Great Tribulation begins, God takes the church out.
 - ii) 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
 - (1) Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come.
 - iii) 1 Thessalonians 5:9
 - (1) The church is not appointed to wrath.
 - (2) Before God declares war on this world, He will call His followers home.
- b) The rapture is a reunion.
 - i) 1 Thessalonians 4:17
 - (1) We will be caught up together with our loved ones who have died in the Lord.
- c) The rapture is a reception.
 - i) Jesus is coming to receive us to Himself.
 - ii) John 14:3



6) WHERE - IT WILL BE IN THE AIR (1 THESSALONIANS 4:17)

- a) The rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events.
 - i) At the second coming, Jesus' feet will touch upon the Mount of Olives, and He will reveal Himself in glory.
 - ii) The rapture will take place in the air and in secret.
- b) We are the bride of Christ and we will be carried away to a secluded place with our Lord.
- c) Song of Solomon 2:10

7) CONCLUSION

- a) The illustration of the big rocks by Stephen Covey.
 - i) Is a jar full of big rocks full? No.
 - ii) Is that same jar full when you pour gravel in and fill it to the top? No.
 - iii) Is that same jar full when you pour sand in-between all the rocks? No.
 - iv) Is that same jar full when you pour water in and fill it to the top? Yes.
 - v) What is the lesson?
 - (1) If he had not put the big rocks in first, he never would have gotten them in there at all.
- b) Some of us have allowed our lives to be filled with gravel and sand and water.
 - i) The big rocks are: salvation, being right with God, being ready for Jesus to come again.
- c) We need to learn of His coming.
- d) We need to live for His coming.
- e) We need to long for the coming of Jesus Christ.
- f) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- g) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you take God's Word and turn to First Thessalonians chapter 4, and in a moment we're going to begin reading a very familiar passage, if you know anything about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We're going to begin in verse 13.

Now, the Christians in Thessalonica were concerned because Jesus was here, He lived and talked, He ascended, and He said, "I'm coming again." And they were expecting Him in their day at any moment. But in the meanwhile, some of the church members, some of their brothers and sisters in Christ and family members, had died and were buried, and they were saying, "Are they going to miss the kingdom? Well where will they be when Jesus comes again?" because they were expecting Jesus in their lifetime.

And so the apostle Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica to answer this question, and here's what he says now, look at it, First Thessalonians chapter 4 beginning in verse 13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant," underscore the word ignorant, "brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not," underscore the word sorrow, "even as others that have no hope," underscore no hope. Three great enemies there: ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness. That's what happens to the person who doesn't understand what I'm going to be talking about this morning. They are living in ignorance, they're filled with sorrow, and they are living lives of despair and they have no hope. And so Paul is writing to answer this question, "What has happened to our dead who died and they will not be here perhaps when Jesus comes again?" Well, Paul is talking here about something that we're going to call "the Rapture of the church." And the Rapture's going to take place in the twinkling of an eye.

Whoever makes these statistics, I don't know, but one person said that the average person blinks his eyes 20,000 times a day. So 20,000 episodes in a day, Jesus may come; in the twinkling of an eye.

Now, I want you to get some things down as we try to answer these questions about the Rapture. And we're going to ask some questions and then answer them, and we're going to ask all of the questions under the heading of W's. First of all, let's think a little bit about **what. What is the sacred mystery of resurrection and Rapture?** Now look if you will in First Thessalonians 4 verse 16 again, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven." So that tells us right away that the central figure is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is going to step from His throne in the glory at the right hand of the Father and from the lofty heights of Heaven, Jesus is going to descend, He's going to make His way back to this Earth. And when He comes back to this Earth, the Bible says here that He is coming with a shout. Do you see that? "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout." Now, that's very interesting, verse 16, because there's going to be a shout that will raise the dead. At His command they're going to come forth from the sea and from the land those who have died and are buried are going to be raised and the oceans are going to heave and give up the dead that are in them and the winding sheets of desert sand will give up the dead that are in them and battlefields will give up the dead that have been buried there, and graveyards may look like plowed fields as Jesus gives a shout and those who are dead are going to be raised. And what a glorious day that will be.



And then living saints are going to be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Look again in First Thessalonians 4 verse 17 if you will. And the Bible says, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." That tells us that the apostle Paul was expecting to be alive when Jesus Christ comes again because he included himself.

Now this word caught up we call the Rapture. The word rapture comes from the Latin word *raptus*, the Greek word *herpaso*, both mean the same thing. It means a catching away. We're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Changed and transformed and then caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Some people say the word rapture is not found in the Bible. Well, that's true, the English word rapture is not found in the Bible. The English word trinity is not found in the Bible. The English word missions is not found in the Bible, but I can guarantee you the Trinity, missions, and the Rapture is taught in the Bible. The *herpaso* is the Greek word.

Let me give you four instances of this, for you Bible students, I want you to write this down, now. Four instances where this word is used in other places, and that will help you to understand why we call it the Rapture. For example, in Acts chapter 8 and verse 39. And Phillip has just baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. And the Bible says, "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip, that the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing." He caught him away. What happened to Phillip? He's just gone. He just is suddenly vacant from that place. And so the word rapture as is used here, it means to catch away speedily. One of these days we're going to be leaving here in the twinkling of an eye.

Here's another place where this word is used. In John chapter 6 and verse 15, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." Now here it says they were coming to Jesus, they're going to seize Him and take Him by force and make Him a king. And the word to seize and take by force, or to take by force is the same word that is translated caught up in other places. And so one of these days not only are we going to be caught away speedily, but we're going to be seized by force and taken away. What does that mean? It means the grave, nor gravity, will be able to hold us. We're going to be caught away. Nothing can keep that from happening.

Now here's the third place where that word is used. First Corinthians 12 verse 1, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away by these dumb idols." And there he uses the same word which means to carry away. So, what is happening is this, that we are going to be caught away speedily, we're going to be caught away by force, and we're going to be carried away, that is, transported from one place and moved to a new place. This world is not our home. We're going to be carried away.

And then here's another place where this same word is used, in Acts chapter 23 and verse 10. The Bible tells about Paul who was in danger. There were some people who wanted to assassinate Paul and Acts 23 verse 10, "And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing Paul should've been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down and to take him by force from among them and bring him into the castle." The phrase there take him by force is the same word that we are translating or calling the Rapture and it means to rescue from danger. Paul was in great



danger and they came and took him by force and delivered him. And when the Rapture comes, we're going to be taken by force, Raptured, moved to a new place, to be delivered from danger.

Now, Paul calls this a mystery, and here's where we get the title sermon from, First Corinthians 15. Put this in your margin, verse 51 and 52. Paul says, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment." And the word moment is the word that we get our word atom from, because these people called an atom the most indivisible piece that they knew of. Now, they had no knowledge of nuclear physics, but they were saying this is the most indivisible thing that our language can describe, in a moment, in an atom, in the twinkling of an eye, this is going to happen. The dead in Christ are going to rise first, and then we which remain are going to be seized, we're going to be caught up by force, we're going to be moved to a new place, and it's going to happen quickly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Just as quickly as you can bat your eyelash, it's going to be over, we're going to be leaving here, we are going up and we are going to glory.

When I was a little boy, near our house there used to be a scrap yard, and there were all kinds of metal in that scrap yard, and there would be a great magnet on a crane, an electro-magnet that would move that steel and that iron from one place to another. If you were to take one of those great magnets and sweep it across the ground, and let's say there's all kind of metal there in the ground, there's lead and zinc and iron and silver and aluminum and steel, all of these things are there in the ground, some under the ground and some on top of the ground, if you were to pass that great magnet over all of that, not every piece of metal would rise. Only that which was made of iron would rise. Why is that? Because the iron has the same nature as the magnet, and if you have the same nature as Jesus Christ when He comes again, you're the one going up, whether you're beneath the ground or whether you're on top of the ground. You're the one going up. If you've been Heaven-born, you will be Heaven-bound if you share the nature of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Now, Pastor, that sounds so fantastic, it sounds so other-worldly, it sounds so superstitious. What is your assurance of these things?" Well here's my assurance. Paul realized that there were some who would have some questions, so he says, "Now look," look in First Thessalonians 4 verse 14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," do you believe that? Hey, if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, folks, you don't have any trouble with the supernatural. Now, if you have trouble with the Rapture, why would you not have trouble with the resurrection? See, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, in like manner, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

So how are we assured? First of all, by **the saving work of our Lord**. Jesus died and rose again. The Gospel itself is supernatural and God is not finished. If God raised Jesus from the dead, then He's going to raise us from the dead. You see, it all hangs together. Jesus Christ, this same Jesus who came the first time literally and rose from the dead, is coming back the second time literally; the same Jesus that was born of a virgin, the same Jesus that walked on the water, the same Jesus that fed the five thousand. Jesus is coming back again, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is necessary to fulfill the purpose of God. The incarnation without the coronation would be like height without depth and east without west. It takes it all to make it happen. And our salvation without our glorification is no salvation at all. His resurrection is the pledge of our resurrection. Now that's the first proof that all of this happens. Jesus has already come out of that grave.



Now, not only the saving work of our Lord, but **the sure Word of our Lord**. Look if you will in First Thessalonians 4 verse 15, “For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord.” Now that’s what makes the difference. We have all kinds of soothsayers, prognosticators, New Age astrologers. We have all kinds of self-styled prophets and mediums and seers and people who are saying what’s going to happen in the future, but they don’t know. Not a one of them knows. The devil himself doesn’t know. As a matter of fact, the devil’s a knucklehead. He really is, I mean, if he ever thought that his plans could succeed. He doesn’t know the future. Only God knows the future, and that’s the reason the apostle Paul says, “This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord.” One third of the Bible is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first and last promise in both the Old Testament and the New Testament deals with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So the saving work of our Lord and the sure Word of our Lord tells us this is true. So that’s the what.

Now, the **who**. Let’s move to the second thing. Who is going to be in this? Well, there is a select multitude of **the Savior and the saints**. Look again in First Thessalonians 4 verse 16 and 17, “For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God,” now watch this, “and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up.” Now, this is a select multitude of the Savior and the saints. Don’t get the idea that there is a general resurrection. No, there’s a first and second resurrection. It is only the dead in Christ who will be raised at the Rapture.

Put in your margin Revelation chapter 20 verses 5 and 6, “But the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Now these verses make it very clear that it is the dead in Christ who are going to be raised, those in the first resurrection. By the way, there’re only two ways to die. Either you die in Christ or you die out of Christ. The dead in Christ are going to be raised. Now, if you are born twice you can only die once. If you’re born only once, you’re going to die twice, and if you die twice the time will come when you wish you hadn’t been born at all.

Now we’re talking about the dead in Christ. And just as there is not a general resurrection, there is not going to be a general Rapture. Not everybody’s going to be caught up. Not all the people on the face of the earth are going to be caught up to meet the Lord. Only we which remain, talking to the church when he said we, he’s including the saints at Thessalonica. He says in First Thessalonians 4:17, “We which remain are going to be transformed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air,” if we are living. Put these verses in your margin. Luke chapter 17 verses 34 and following to verse 37, “I tell you,” now this is Jesus, “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed. The one shall be taken, the other left. Two women shall be grinding together. The one shall be taken, the other left. Two men shall be in the field. The one shall be taken and the other left.’ And they answered and said unto Him, ‘Where, Lord?’ And He said unto them, ‘Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.’” And so, if Jesus comes on one side of the world, it’s midnight and it may be at midnight. There are people in the bed, one here and one here. One’s gone, one’s left. Or it may be on the other side of the world at daylight. Two people are in the field, one taken, the other left. The other airplane pilot may go. The star quarterback under the ball may go. Who knows where you will be at that mo-



ment, whether you will go or be left, but there is a select multitude. Not everybody is going and you need to be careful that you are not left behind.

Now here's the third thing: **when**. We've talked about what, we've talked about who, let's talk about when. **When is a sudden moment that is close and certain.** Now I say it is a sudden moment, a sudden moment, "In the twinkling of an eye." You don't know and I don't know. I do know it is close. You say, "Pastor, how can you tell that it is close? It may be fifty years." It is still close. It may be a thousand years. It is still close. "We're always living on the edge of eternity." The Bible says in Revelation chapter 1 verse 3, "The time is at hand." The Second Coming of Jesus is always close and it is always certain. Paul was expecting Christ in his day. Was he wrong? No, he was right. Let me give you some Scriptures, jot them down, don't try to turn to them. Matthew 24 verse 36. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in Heaven, but My Father only." And if anybody gives you a date as to when Jesus Christ is coming again, he's a liar. He doesn't know. You can't set a date. If I were God and some man happened to guess the right date, I'd change it. "That day and that hour no man knows."

Put this Scripture down, Matthew 24 verse 38 and 39, "For as the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark. Even so the coming of the Son of Man shall be." Now, that's very interesting. He says just like the days of Noah. Some people have the idea the church is going to be in the Great Tribulation when the Rapture comes or have gone through the Great Tribulation. No! That's not what this Scripture says. They're eating, they're drinking, they're marrying, they're giving in marriage, the daily round of life is going and then suddenly, just like that, Jesus comes. That's the reason He says in Matthew 24 verse 42, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 24 verse 44, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Not in the time that you figured it out, but in the time when you haven't figured Him out. I've always thought He'd come on Monday. I can't think at all on Monday. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

First Corinthians 15 verses 51 and 52, we've already given you this, "Behold, I will show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep," that is, not everybody's going to die, that's a metaphor, or a euphemism for a Christian who has died. The Bible doesn't call it death, it calls it sleep. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." Now, remember, that you bat your eyes 20,000 times a day and so today you've got 20,000 episodes when Jesus may come.

Somebody says, "Well, Pastor, what about the signs of the times? Don't the signs of the times prove that Jesus is coming?" No, no. Friend, we don't have to have the signs. Don't get the idea that there's something we're waiting for. "Well, do the signs of the time tell us that we may be nearer to the Second Coming of Jesus?" Yes. "Well, is there a contradiction?" Not really. You know what's going to happen? Pretty soon you're going to go to the stores, you go to the mall and you're going to find out in the mall they're going to start putting up Christmas decorations. Now when they start putting up Christmas decorations in the mall, does that mean Christmas is coming? No, means Thanksgiving is coming. It may mean Halloween is coming. But what I mean is, that these things that really are supposed to be pointing toward Christmas, they can tell us something about some other times also. And what I'm saying is this, that there are signs, but they don't prove to us that Jesus is coming today or



tomorrow. You should always be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The signs may give you some extra special encouragement.

But not only are there going to be some signs, there are going to be some sounds. Look in First Thessalonians 4 verse 16, "For the Lord Himself shall descend with a shout, the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God." Now first of all the shout is the Lord's voice Himself. Jesus comes with a shout. And we remember Jesus in John 11:43 standing before the grave of Lazarus and saying, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth. When Jesus descends from His lofty heights in the glory and He is there in the clouds, He'll give a shout, and the whole church will come forth. The dead in Christ will rise first. And so the shout is pointed primarily to the church.

And then there's the voice of the archangel. Who is the archangel? That's the chief angel. He's in charge of Heaven's armies, and why does he speak? He's not speaking primarily to the church, but he's speaking to Israel because God has called time-out for Israel, and after the church is taken out, then God begins to move again with the nation Israel. He's moving with individual Jews, but He'll begin to move with the nation Israel and so the archangel now is speaking to martial the angels of the world for the Great Tribulation that is going to come on the Earth that both Jew and Gentile will endure. So while the Lord speaks to the church, the archangel is speaking primarily to the angels that will be dealing in the world, and then the trump of God which deals primarily with Israel, He again begins to assemble Israel for these last days. And Numbers 10 verses 9 and 10, "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then shall ye blow an alarm with the trumpets." And so here our Lord is coming with the voice of the archangel, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

Now let's move to the next and the fourth question: **why**, why? We've talked about who and we've talked about when and let's talk a little bit about why. Well, the why, it is **a strategic motive of rescue, of reunion, and reception**. Look again in First Thessalonians 4 verse 17 if you will, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Rescue, reunion, and reception.

You see, first of all, it's **rescue**. The Great Tribulation is ready to begin, but before God allows the Great Tribulation here upon this Earth, He takes the church out. But let me give you some verses. You're in First Thessalonians, look in chapter 1 verses 9 and 10, "For they themselves show us that what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come. There is wrath coming, but He has delivered us. And then go over in chapter 5, First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The church is not appointed to wrath, and so when God declares war on this world, He's going to call His nationals home before He declares war. So the why, first of all, is rescue.

And then **reunion**. Verse 17 says we're going to be caught up together. These people were wondering about the dead who had died, and had they lost them forever? And Paul says, "Oh, no, oh, no. We're going to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." And the songwriter says, "We'll



sing and shout and dance about; the Lamb will dry our tears. We'll have a grand homecoming week the first ten thousand years."

And then it will be **reception**. Jesus is coming to receive us to Himself. Remember John 14:3? "And if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself."

Now, fifthly: the **where**. Where is this going to be? Well, **it's going to be in the air**. Look at it again, First Thessalonians 4:17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This is not truly the Second Coming of Jesus, this is the Rapture. At the Second Coming His feet are going to touch upon the Mount of Olives. That's when He comes to reveal Himself in glory. But this is secret, this is secluded. Friend, it is a secluded meeting of the bridegroom and the bride. What do a bridegroom and bride want? They want seclusion; they want to be left alone for a period to consummate the marriage.

And in an Oriental wedding, the groom would take the initiative, he would go to the father's house, negotiate for the bride, pay a price for the bride. They would call that the betrothal. They would have a cup of wine over which a betrothal blessing had been given, and they would drink from that cup together. And then He would go away back to His father's house to prepare a place for her, and she would stay there and begin to prepare her trousseau and her wedding gown, and then at a particular time known to him, not known to her. She didn't have the joy and the pleasure of setting the date. The groom set the date in conjunction with his father. And he would come, he would come with a torchlight parade many times, and there would be one who would go before him and would shout, "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" And she would gather her things and be ready. It was supposed to be exciting. I think modern ladies would like a little more time in the beauty shop, but this is the way it was. And they would come with torch lights if it were at nighttime, and sometimes it would be at midnight, and take her away, and then she would be caught up in his arms, and they would go away to a honeymoon suite for the consummation of the marriage.

And that's what's going to happen. We're the bride of Christ, and we're going to be in a secluded place with our Lord. I love the Song of Solomon chapter 2 and verse 10. It just reminds me of this time, "My Beloved spake and said unto me, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.'"

Well, that's what's going to happen in the twinkling of an eye. Now I have found myself so rushing through this material that very frankly I wish I had about another hour to talk on each of these points. But let me just say this, folks. Suddenly, perhaps before we have the final benediction, there will be the shout. There will be the voice of the archangel and there will be the trump of God.

There's a man named Steven Covey who's written a book, and I certainly don't buy into his theology, but he has a great illustration in that book I want to share with you. And, I may not have all the details right, but I know I have the thought right. He said a certain professor had his students in college, and he had a great big, wide-mouth jar. And in that jar he had some large rocks. And he asked his students this question, because the rocks came all the way up to the top. "Is this jar filled?" Well, one or two students lifted their hand and said, "Yes, the jar is filled." He said, "No, the jar is not filled." And then he took some gravel and put gravel in top of that jar, and the gravel began to fill in all the places



around where all those big rocks are. He shook it down good like that, smoothed it off. He said, "Now, now is the jar filled?" They said, "Yes, professor, now it's filled." He said, "No, it's not." And he took some fine sand and began to put it on top of the gravel and shake it down, and it filled every little place there, and he said, "Now is the jar filled?" They were afraid to answer now. And, a few of them said, "Yes, now it is filled." He said, "No, it's not filled yet." And then he took some water and poured the water in the fine sand, and the water began to seep into every little crevice and so forth and floated on the top. And he said, "Now is the jar filled?" They said, "You tell us, Professor." He said, "Yes, the jar is filled." He said, "What is the lesson?"

And they said, "Well, Professor, the lesson is this. That there'll come a time in your life when it will become so filled and so saturated you can't put anything else in."

He said, "No, that's not the lesson. Here's the lesson. If I had not put the big rocks in first, I would never be able to put them in. That's the lesson. If I had not put the big rocks in first."

Now listen to me. There's some of you who've allowed your life to be filled with gravel and sand and water. You know what the big rocks are? Salvation; being right with God; ready for Jesus to come again. Have you been so busy with all of these other things? See, we need to learn of His coming. We need to live for His coming. We need to long for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now if your life is filled with gravel and sand and water, but you've left out the Rock of Ages, why don't you give Jesus right now, just empty that jar right now, right now, and put Jesus in? Would you pray a prayer like this? "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead, and now like a little child, once and for all, I trust You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life, forgive my sin, save me, Jesus." Friend, pray that from your heart. Young man, young lady, little boy, little girl, pray that. "Lord Jesus, come into my life. Come in now. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, save me. I trust You only and You always to do it. And Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen."



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