

***We who Remain Shall Be Caught up Together w/ the Lord: 1 Thess 4:13–18***

Dr. John Niemelä Grace Chapel [www.mol316.com](http://www.mol316.com) January 7, 2009

**INTRODUCTION**

**Author of 1 Thessalonians: Paul**

**Recipients of 1 Thessalonians: A new church in Thessalonica comprised of new believers**

**Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica: Acts 17:1–10: November 50–January 51** (cf. earlier messages)

**Dates of First and Second Thessalonians**

1 Thessalonians: Early summer 51 (only about 8 months since Paul arrived in Thessalonica)  
2 Thessalonians: Summer 51

**Occasion of First Thessalonians:**

After Paul left Thessalonica, the church there came under strong persecution. Opponents charged that Paul had fleeced & abandoned them. Furthermore, some within the congregation died. They feared that the tribulation had begun and about whether they would be reunited with deceased believers.

**Thematic Statement: 1:9–10**

<i>How you turned to God from idols</i>	(2:1–3:13)	The relationship between Paul & them
<i>to serve the living and true God</i>	(4:1–12)	Continue serving the Lord
<i>and to wait for His Son from heaven</i>	(4:13–5:11)	Expect the pre-trib rapture

**Review**

(1:2–10) Paul prays thankfully because they apply the word in love, await the Lord's deliverance & are elect; specifically, his message had power & assurance by the Holy Spirit, which they perceived in Paul's demeanor among them; so they followed Paul & God, after receiving that message in affliction, so they became examples to believers in Greece & elsewhere, so others speak of their faith: specifically, of Paul's entrance to the Thessalonians who now serve God & patiently await the rapture

(2:1–12) Paul's entry to Thess was productive, despite sufferings because, God entrusted Him to share truth, so Paul pleases God (bels' judge); he did not flatter (for gain) nor seek \$ befitting an apostle, but was gentle as a nursing mother w/ own infant, seeking to impart word & his very life, because he loves them, evidenced by his laboring to avoid burdening them; they know his integrity among them as a father directing his own children to live worth of God who calls them to the kingdom

(2:13–16) Paul thanks God that they welcomed His word, in which they were like Judean churches in facing persecution by their countrymen who opposed God & people, killing & hindering those God sent

(2:17–20) Paul tried to return to Thess, but anticipates being w/ them in kingdom, because he loves them

(3:1–13) After leaving Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy to establish and encourage them, so their afflictions (to which—as Paul had said—bels are appointed) would not deter them (that Satan had not caused defection that would nullify Paul's sufferings & labor that they be rewardable); Timothy returned to Paul with good news which encouraged Paul, who rejoices that they stand firm and who prays that he may come to edify them and also prays that their mutual love increase, so the Lord will establish them in preparation to returning with Him at second advent  
(4:1–12) [Based upon their initial response to Paul's coming & their progress, Paul urges them to abound still more in obedience; [Specifically], they are to abound still more obeying God's will (to be [sexually] holy) by abstaining from sexual immorality; [specifically,] bels are to gain (sexual) control of their own bodies in sanctification and honor, rather than being controlled by passionate lust as w/ Gunbels; lest we defraud brethren in this, because God (who called us to holiness, not to uncleanness) disciplines, as He warns; this, one who rejects this does not merely reject the word of man, but rejects (the word of) God who gave us the HS Paul does not need to inform them of the command to love one another, because they are already God-taught to love the brethren & their love abounds for Macedonian bels, but it should abound still more, that they aspire for a quiet life, being occupied with their own business & in productive work, as Paul commands, that they would conduct themselves properly toward unbelievers & would not lack

## BACKGROUND:

### Thematic Statement: 1:9–10

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This is in the third section of the body of the book

### 4:13–5:11 = section 3, which has two subpoints

Section 3A is 4:13–18

Section 3B is 5:1–11

Why is this important?

Those who reject the pre-tribulation rapture often say that 5:1, begins with *de* (*but*) a minor conjunction. They then claim that 4:13–5:11 talks about one topic only.

It is true that 5:1 begins with *de*. It is true that *de* can be a minor conjunction. However, it is not true that 5:1 only begins with *de*. It starts with (*peri de*), as in 4:9 and 4:13

Look at 4:9: But concerning (*peri de*) brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you.

Do they need for Paul to write *concerning* brotherly love? No

This is the first topic

Look at 4:13: But (*de*) I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning (*peri*) those who have fallen asleep. . . .

Do they need Paul to write *concerning* those who have fallen asleep? Yes

This is the second topic

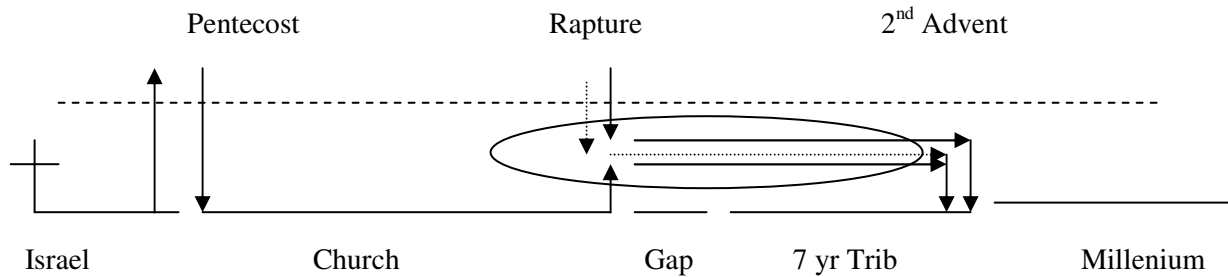
Look at 5:1: But concerning (*peri de*) the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

Do they need for Paul to write *concerning* times and seasons? No

This is the third topic

Thus, although 4:13–5:11 talks about the future, there are two topics. 4:13–18 speaks concerning the rapture. 5:1–11 speaks concerning the times & seasons (specifically the day of the Lord)

## OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE



Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven. Ten days later (Pentecost), the Holy Spirit descended and the Church Age began. At the Rapture, all Church Age believers (alive or dead) will be taken up to meet Jesus, who descends to the clouds. We (and He) remain in the clouds through a gap of unspecified length and through the seven-year Tribulation unto the Second Advent when we will accompany Christ as He comes to earth. He will conquer His enemies and will soon establish His 1000 year Millennial Kingdom.

The dotted horizontal line represents heaven. Notice that the Church meets Christ in the clouds (below heaven). We stay there until it is time to come to earth (at least seven years later). (The Church comes in two parts. Those alive come up from earth. Those who sleep come from the presence of the Lord.)

Why a gap? The Rapture marks the end of the Church on earth, but the Tribulation does not begin immediately. The Tribulation begins when Israel signs the peace treaty with the Roman government. Scripture does not specify how long the gap will be.

## NEW EXPOSITION

**(4:13) Paul does not want the Thessalonians to be ignorant concerning believers who sleep (have died) in order that they would not grieve (hopelessly) as unbelievers who lack expectancy**

The word for *sleep* is *koimaomai*. We get the English words *coma* and *cemetery* from this. This word also appears in verses 14 and 15. It is not the same word for *sleep* that occurs in 5:6, 7, and 10 (*katheudō*). It is not accidental that Paul switches terms. We will devote attention to this issue next time.

Paul is not saying that we should not grieve. He is saying that when we grieve, the grief should be balanced with expectancy (hope).

**(4:14) Our belief that the crucified Jesus rose again is the foundation for certainty that God will (with Christ) raise believers who sleep (die) in Jesus**

**(4:15) [As an explanation of our certainty [that believers who sleep in Jesus will rise with Him], Paul speaks God's word that believers who are alive and remain on earth [at the rapture] will not precede those who sleep (in Jesus)]**

The Thessalonians were worried that those believers who had died since Paul was present with them might miss out on the rapture

**(4:16) [As an explanation of believers who are alive and remain on earth (at the rapture) not precede those who sleep in Jesus], the Lord Himself will descend with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and with God's trumpet; then the dead in Christ will rise first**

There is a lot of argument over whether these are three things or whether three phrases refer to one thing: shout, archangel's voice, God's trumpet

There is a lot of argument about 1 Corinthians 15:52, which mentions the *last trumpet*, and Rev 9:14 which is the final trumpet mentioned in Revelation. There are many problems that happen when people start comparing apples and oranges and bananas. Without taking much time, 1 Thes 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:52 speak about a trumpet, which is the last trumpet for the church age, but it is not the last trumpet ever. Rev 9:14 is a trumpet that occurs during the Tribulation.

Illustration: I'll meet you at the last bell. (Some students had 6 classes, others had 7)

**(4:17) [After the dead in Christ rise], then believers who are alive and remain (until the rapture) will be caught up together with the Lord (and those who have died) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, with the result that all Church Age believers will be together with the Lord always**

Some people say, *The word rapture is not found in the Bible.* Well, yes and no. The Latin translation of the words caught up is *rapiemur*, which comes from the Latin word *rapturo*. The English word *Rapture* comes from the Latin word *rapturo*. Another English word that comes from this is raptor

There is a lot of argument about the word *meet*.

Those who oppose the pre-Trib rapture say that the Church meets Jesus in the clouds to escort Him IMMEDIATELY to earth.

Many who favor the pre-Trib rapture say that the Church meets Jesus in the clouds for Him to escort it back to heaven.

I say that the passage does not say that anyone goes anywhere for a while. I think that the Church and the Lord remain in the clouds for seven years. Then, we accompany Him as He comes to earth in the Second Advent.

**(4:18) We are to comfort one another with these words (that all believers can expect to be raptured to meet the Lord in the clouds and we will all be together with Him always**

## **CONCLUSION**

See the statement for verse 18, which is the conclusion to the passage.

*Next week, we will see things from a different vantage point. Paul will show that a group that may not be expecting the Rapture will also benefit. Stay tuned.*