

The Blessed Hope

Including excerpts from the FireBible Article: Overseers and their Duties by Danny Duvall

It is not necessary to have a *FireBible* to study this lesson, but it will be very helpful if you do. [To purchase a *FireBible* click here.](#)

What we often call the “blessed hope of the church” is an exciting future event. “In the blink of an eye” Jesus will call His church to Himself and we will meet Him in paradise.

Two groups of people are included in this event:

- those who previously died while knowing Christ in the centuries after His death and resurrection
- those who are still alive on the earth and know Him as their Lord and Savior.

The Rapture article in the *FireBible* gives a deeper understanding of this truth:

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV) ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

NOTE: The word “rapture” comes from the Latin work *raptu*, which means **caught away** or **caught up**.

As mentioned above, the event we call “the Rapture,” described in 1 Corinthians 15, refers to a moment when Christ will take His followers from the earth to meet Him in the air and to be with Him in heaven. It involves only those who are part of Christ’s **true** church, His faithful followers worldwide, and who are in a right relationship with Him.

1. As Christ is descending from heaven for His church, the resurrection of the “dead in Christ” will occur.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

This is not the same resurrection described later in Revelation 20. It applies only to unsaved people who died without a saving relationship with Jesus as their Lord. That event will occur after Christ physically returns to earth as King, destroys the forces of the antichrist, and confines Satan to the bottomless pit.

Revelation 20:4 (ESV) Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The resurrection in Revelation 20:4 relates to those who turned to Christ and died for their faith in him during the **tribulation** (i.e., the period following the rapture, during which the antichrist will rise to power and God will execute his severe end–time judgments on the earth.)

2. In the Rapture, both resurrected believers and those still living will instantaneously receive new imperishable and immortal bodies.

This will happen in an instant, “in the twinkling of an eye.” The word used in scripture is ‘atomo,’ meaning ‘a measure of time that cannot be divided.’ Essentially, faster than the speed of light!

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 (ESV) ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

3. Both the resurrected and still-living Christians will be caught up **together** to meet Christ in the air (i.e., in the atmosphere between earth and heaven).

4. They will be **visibly** united with Christ, taken to heaven, and united with other residents of heaven from previous times (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

5. For them, there will be no more:
 - a. suffering or distress (2 Cor. 5:2, Phil. 3:21)
 - b. persecution or oppression
 - c. sin or death (1Cor. 15:51-56).

6. The rapture also rescues Jesus' followers from "the coming wrath" – the Great Tribulation.

- a. The hope that our Savior will soon return to take us out of the world to "be with the Lord forever" is the Blessed Hope of all who have entrusted their lives to Christ.
- b. It is a major source of comfort for suffering Christians.

Titus 2:13 (ESV) waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

7. The early church lived in full expectation that Christ's return was imminent.

- a. Paul uses "we" in 1Thessalonians 4:17 because he believed the Lord's return could have happened in his own lifetime, and he

communicated this same sense of **urgency** and anticipation to the Thessalonians.

- b. The Bible insists that Christ's followers in all time periods must remain alert and ready for the Lord's return.

Romans 13:11 (ESV) Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

8. Those who claim to follow the Lord Jesus but are unfaithful and do not truly have a personal saving relationship with the Lord will be left behind. (Matthew 25:1-13 ESV)

- a. They will be left with a **false** religious system set up by the Antichrist (Revelation 17:1-18 ESV)
- b. They will experience God's wrath during the tribulation period.

9. Following the Rapture is “the day of the Lord,” a time that brings distress and judgment on the ungodly (1 Thessalonians 5:2-10 ESV).

That will be followed by the second stage of Christ’s coming, when He returns physically to earth at the end of the seven-year Tribulation to defeat the forces of the antichrist, destroy the ungodly and reign on earth for a thousand years at the end of time as we know it.

Matthew 24:42 (ESV) Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 (ESV)** and answer the following from the *FireBible* study notes:¹

1. To which event do these verses refer?
2. What does the phrase “caught up in the clouds” mean?
3. How does the doctrine of the Rapture encourage true followers of Jesus?

¹ Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 274.

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Read the *FireBible* article: *The Rapture*. Answer the following:²

1. How is the resurrection of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 different from the one in Revelation 20:1-4?
2. What will happen to believers who are alive on earth when Jesus returns?
3. What will happen to believers in Jesus who died before the Rapture?
4. What are some experiences and blessings awaiting believers at the Rapture?

² Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 275.

5. We refer to the return of Christ for us as the Blessed _____.

6. When should we expect the Lord to return?

7. At the Rapture, what will happen to all who claim to be Christians but do not have a saving relationship with God?

8. According to scripture, what takes on the earth in the seven-year time period after the Rapture?