

Raptured To Christ?

Predicting the return of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world is not new. Throughout the centuries men have been vainly foretelling the second coming of Christ based upon false interpretations of so-called signs or clues they have discovered or identified. The New Testament clearly reveals that men do not and will not know the day and hour of the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

The word “rapture” is not used in the Scriptures. This doctrine is a component of the false teachings associated with an earthly millennial reign of Christ with his saints after a great tribulation period. Many men teach that before “the tribulation” the righteous dead and the living saints will be raptured together with the Lord to wait for the end of the tribulation. This false doctrine of “the rapture” has grown out of misconceptions of the nature of Christ’s church and kingdom.

The inspired word of God does teach that the saved will be “caught up” with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Before examining Paul’s words of comfort in the letter to the church at Thessalonica, consider the claims Jesus made while preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). The heavenly Father gave authority to Jesus to execute judgment, and that authority includes the power to call all in the graves to come forth (John 5:27-28). The Lord revealed that the righteous dead and the wicked dead will be raised up at the same hour. He explained further that the believer, who is to inherit everlasting life, will be raised up on the last day (John 6:40). If the wicked and the righteous are resurrected the same hour, that hour is the last day. The righteous dead are not raised up to be raptured with Christ on one day while the wicked dead remain in the grave for a later date.

In First Thessalonians 4 the apostle is writing to clarify Christians’ understanding of the hope that the living and the dead share in Christ. Those who die in the Lord before Jesus’ return will still be with the Lord when He comes (vv. 13-14). The living saints will not “precede those who are asleep” (v. 15). Although the day of the Lord will be unexpected (1 Thessalonians 5:2), the manner of Christ’s return is such that it will be heard and seen (4:16; Acts 1:11). Jesus Christ died to bring salvation “that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thessalonians 5:10). The dead in Christ and the living in Christ will meet the Lord in the clouds to be with Him forever (4:17). The day the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified in His saints is the day the unbelieving and disobedient will be separated from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The man-made doctrine of the rapture is not supported by Scripture.