

## God's Eternal Plan #16

### The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**The Old Testament saints were given a glorious hope.** They confidently expected that one day they would stand in the presence of a Redeemer, that they would enjoy Him in the place that He had gone to prepare for them. And the saints of old walked in the light of that hope, based on the promise of God.

We read of Abraham's hope in Hebrews 11:8-10, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." **That city was the place that God would prepare for those who trusted Him for their salvation.** But while Abraham looked ahead for that *city* he spent his life "dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Abraham never saw that hope, for that city was not prepared for him in his day. **And as much as Abraham held to that hope, he believed he would come to it by resurrection.** And before resurrection it was necessary for him to pass through death. Abraham lived his life looking forward to that "*city*," but confident that before he could come to that *city* he must pass through the "valley of dark shadows."

**A study of the Scriptures reveals the Old Testament saints held to a very clear hope of the resurrection of the body.** For example, *Job* made this statement in Job 19:25-27, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Job was confident that he would see God and enjoy His presence forever. **He looked forward to a Redeemer, but Job expected to go into the presence of that Redeemer by way of death and resurrection.** The prophet Isaiah writes concerning this time of resurrection in Isaiah 26:19, "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isaiah looked for a time when the *mute* lips and the *silent* tongue would be brought of the graves to stand in the presence of God to sing His praises forever. The prophet Daniel also shares his confidence of such a time of resurrection in Daniel 12:2-3, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."

**But it is not until we open the pages of the New Testament do we find the answer to the great mystery of the hope of the resurrection.** Paul gives us this insight in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, “Behold, I tell 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In addition to the *hope* of the resurrection, Paul now reveals to us another great truth, and that is that “We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall be changed.” **So now in the New Testament God has revealed that there two avenue available for the child of God to go into the presence of God bodily: one by way of resurrection, and one by way of translation.** Each of these has to do with the *rapture*.

Therefore, Paul says in verses 13-15 of our text, “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. For this we say to you 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.” The Greek word translated “prevent” in the King James Version and “precede” in the New King James Version, is “*phthano*” (*fthan-o*) and literally means, “to obtain an advantage.” Paul is saying, “Those people who are alive and remain unto the coming of Christ have no advantage over those who are dead.” The reason for this is seen in verse 16, “(For) the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

**If you notice verse 16 in its fullness, you will find some great Scriptural events that are more often than not overlooked when studying Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.** Verse 16 says, “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.” These events are the “shout,” the “voice of the archangel,” and the “trump of God.” The Greek construction of these prepositional phrases show that these three events have a vital connection with the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

**A careful study of these events will tells that when Jesus comes again, He is going to deal with three groups of people.** He is going to deal with the “saints,” He is going to deal with “Satan and his angels,” and He is going to deal with “sinners.” And each of these events relates to each one of these groups that Jesus is going to deal with.

Look at the *events* of the Rapture.

**The first of these events is the shout of victory.** Verse 16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout...” This word “**shout**” in the Greek denotes that of a Commanding Officer calling for all of his troops to “**muster**” together. It is a shout of *command*, and it is a shout of *authority*, and it is a shout of *sovereignty*.

Jesus talks about this very hour in John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” **Through the years I have preached funerals where I have stood by and listened as a wife or husband, a mother or a father, would stand over the casket and speak to the lifeless body that was there, but there was no response.** But there is coming a day when the voice of sovereignty will speak, and those in the oldest graves, and in the deepest seas, will come forth at that command, “**Come up here!**”

**But if you ever expect to hear the voice of sovereignty when it calls forth His children from the grave, then you must be willing to hear it today.** Jesus made this statement in John 5:24-25, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.” Notice that Jesus says, “...the hour is coming, and now is...” This is not the Rapture, but is spoken in the present tense, “...when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.” **He is speaking of the *spiritually* dead!** Jesus is saying, “While I am here on this earth, and during this age of grace, I am going to be speaking to people who are dead in sins and trespasses, and they that hear my voice *now*, and they that come out of their *spiritual* graves *now*, these are the ones who will hear my voice at the Rapture, and will come out of their *physical* graves.”

Therefore, the first event of the Rapture is the *sovereign* shout of victory.

**The next event is the voice of the archangel.** Verse 16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel...”

**I have discovered something as I studied this passage of Scripture concerning the archangel.** Did you know the word “**archangel**” is found only twice in the entire Bible? It is found right here in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, and also in Jude 9. **And we are told in Jude 9,** “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending

with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you!” **There is only one who is named as the archangel in the Word of God, and that is “Michael.”**

**We see “Michael” again in Daniel 10:13,** “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia (that is a reference to the devil) withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.” **Daniel said,** “When I was trying to serve God, and when I was trying to prophecy, the devil came and attacked me, but Michael came to help me.” **Now look at Daniel 12:1-3,** “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” **Notice that Michael is involved with the resurrection of God’s people!**

**But what does that have to do with us? Michael is the *protector* of the destiny of God’s people.** God has promised a certain destiny to every believer, and Michael is the archangel sent from God to protect that destiny, and to keep Satan from robbing us of our destiny.

**What is that destiny? The destiny of every believer is a glorious *resurrection!*** And Satan does not want to see that happen, so Michael has been given the responsibility of fighting Satan to protect our destiny.

**Let’s go back to Jude 9,** “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you!” **What is this Scripture referring to?** You remember when Moses died, he had an unusual funeral, for the Bible tells us God buried Moses. Only two personalities, other than God, knew where the body of Moses was: *Michael* and the *devil!* Now Jude tells us that Michael and Satan had a fight over the body of Moses, but why?

**There came a day when God wanted to borrow the body of Moses for a special purpose, but death and the grave is Satan’s domain, that’s his territory.** The kingdom of darkness is Satan’s kingdom. And here is Michael invading the devil’s territory.

**What did Michael want with the body of Moses?** He wanted it for the Mount of Transfiguration experience, as seen in Matthew 17:1-3, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain

by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.” **Therefore, when Michael went to get the body of Moses Satan withstood because Satan doesn’t want anybody to be taken out of the grave.** The destiny of every believer is a glorious resurrection, and to be free from the grave, and Satan will always oppose that, and therefore Michael is the protector of our destiny as it relates to the resurrection!

**What about Elijah?** He was not buried he was taken up in a “whirlwind” (not a “chariot of fire”).

**The next event is the trumpet of God.** Verse 16 says, “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.” The “trumpet of God” is a summons to judgment!

Isaiah 27:13 gives us this insight, “So it shall be in that day: the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” Joel 2:1 says, “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand.” **Throughout the Word of God, the trumpet sounding is a summons to all people to the *judgment* of God.**

**When Christ comes again, He is going to come with the sound of “the trumpet of God.”** And when the trumpet sounds, God will settle all accounts. Revelation 20:11-15 gives us this insight, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things that were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

**A study of the Second Coming of Christ offers great hope and an awesome warning.**