

LESSON 6: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

The Rapture

1. What does Paul mean by “those who fall asleep” and “have fallen asleep” (vv. 13-14). What does this say about Paul’s view of death? Are we to understand death as a natural part of life? (See James 1:13-15; Romans 5:12; 6:23; John 11:17-37; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 51-58; Revelation 1:17-18; 2:11; 20:1-15.) What significance has Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection for us as we consider the prospects of our own death? (See Philippians 1:18-24; 3:7-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; Hebrews 2:8-15.)
2. This passage is famous for its discussion of “the rapture” (from the Latin word that translates the Greek word in verse 17, “caught up”), in which Paul sets forth a stunning vision of the future that awaits all those who believe in Christ. With what coming event does Paul connect this “rapture” (v. 15)? What concerns do you think Paul is addressing in these verses? What main point does he wish to convey here?
3. What three sounds will be heard by believers (v. 16)? What significance do you attribute to each of these? Will unbelievers hear these sounds? See Matthew 24:26-44, and compare the two passages. Do you think these refer to the same event, or to different events?
4. We will discuss some of the different views concerning the “rapture” and its relation to Christ’s second coming and the so-called Millennium (the thousand-year reign of Christ described in Revelation 20:1-6). Look at the chart outlining the various views. Are you amillennial, postmillennial, historic premillennial, premillennial dispensationalist, panmillennial (!), or thoroughly confused?
5. What does Paul mean when he writes that “we shall be with the Lord forever” (v. 17)? (See 5:9-10; John 14:3; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; and Colossians 3:4.) How are you to “encourage each other with these words” (v. 18)?

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings

