

COMFORT CONCERNING THE DEAD IN CHRIST (VV. 13–18)

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15 – BLUE

- Authority of the message: “by the word of the Lord”
 - Not speculation, but revelation.
 - No parallel in Gospels or Israel’s prophecy.
 - Options: Paul is a fraud, or Paul is entrusted with wholly new revelation.
 - Scripture itself affirms Paul’s inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:16).
- “We which are alive and remain”
 - Shows Paul did not know the timing.
 - “And remain” = survival not guaranteed.
 - Expectation, not prediction.
- “The coming of the Lord”
 - Same “coming” as v. 14.
 - Cannot be second coming because:
 - Second coming = judgment on earth (Rev 19:11–16).
 - Rapture = meeting in the air for comfort.
 - Second coming = deliverance of Israel and kingdom.
 - Rapture = reunion of the Body of Christ.
 - Second coming = judgment on nations.
 - Rapture = resurrection of dead in Christ first.
- “Prevent” = precede
 - Greek PHTHANŌ = come before.
 - Latin PRAEVENIRE = come before.
 - Middle English “prevent” = go in advance of.
 - Modern shift = hinder/stop.
 - Meaning here: the living do not go ahead of the dead.
 - Order is fixed: dead rise first.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16 – BLUE

- “The Lord himself shall descend”
 - Expected (Acts 1:11; Zech 14:4).
- “With a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God”
 - JW error: Jesus = Michael.
 - Text: Lord descends **with** the voice, not **as** the archangel.
 - Archangel’s voice = accompaniment.
- “Trump of God”

- Greek EN = accompanied by, not possession/identity.
- Must not be equated with “last trump” (1 Cor 15:51–52).
 - “Last” means last, cannot allow another.
 - Therefore 1 Cor 15 = different event.
- This trumpet is unique to 1 Thess 4.
- “The dead in Christ shall rise first”
 - Same group as “asleep in Jesus.”
 - Does not include pre-Christian saints (they did not believe Jesus died/rose).
 - Even apostles didn’t believe until after (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11; John 20:9).
 - To be “in Christ” = trust in His death, burial, resurrection (1 Cor 15:1–4).
 - Resurrection order matches v. 15 (“shall not prevent”).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 – BLUE

- “We which are alive and remain”
 - Living join raised dead together.
- “Caught up”
 - Greek HARPAZŌ = seize/snatch away.
 - Latin Vulgate RAPIEMUR → RAPTUS → “rapture.”
 - Related English: “raptor.”
 - Term not in English Bibles but theological word like “Trinity,” etc.
- “In the clouds... meet the Lord in the air”
 - Only “meeting in the air” in Scripture.
 - Fits as new revelation to Paul.
- “So shall we ever be with the Lord”
 - “So” = manner of catching up, not “air.”
 - Permanence of union with Christ.
 - Answers location (with the Lord).
 - Does not answer role (left undefined).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18 – BLUE

- Purpose: comfort.
 - Dead in Christ not lost.
 - Both dead and living raised/raptured not to judgment but to be with the Lord.
- Contrast: second coming.
 - For survivors: dread, not comfort.
 - Trib martyrs: raised to judgment (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:21; Zechariah 14).
- Comfort of Pauline revelation:
 - In Christ, we are complete and cared for.
 - Hope rests not in surviving judgment but in being with Him forever.

THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

- Central question: when does the rapture occur?
 - Paul reveals truth never before known.
 - Cannot be folded into earlier prophecy.
 - Must be taken in Pauline light.
- Is the catching up pre- or post-tribulation?
- Distinctions between rapture and second coming:
 - **Rapture** = imminent, can happen at any moment (1 Cor 15:52).
 - **Second coming** = preceded by definite signs (man of sin, abomination of desolation, mark of the beast, cosmic judgments).
 - If events can be charted, it is not imminent.
- Distinct purposes:
 - **Second coming** = judgment, kingdom, wrath, terror.
 - **Rapture** = comfort, grace, reunion.
- Nature of the Body of Christ:
 - Body = neither Jew nor Gentile (Ephesians 2:15).
 - Tribulation = Jewish in character (Jacob's trouble, covenant curses, kingdom prelude).
 - Cannot have a single period that both recognizes Israel as covenant nation AND does not recognize Jew/Gentile.
 - Programs are mutually exclusive.
 - Mid- or post-trib positions create logical impossibility (forcing primary focus on Israel while a secondary focus on the body of Christ).
- Conclusion:
 - Pre-trib rapture preserves integrity of God's programs.
 - Israel faces her tribulation.

- Nations face judgment.
- Body of Christ safely with her Lord.
- Blessed hope = caught up before tribulation begins.

KEEPING PROPHECY OUT OF MYSTERY

- Common error: dragging prophecy into the mystery age.
- Modern examples:
 - Is politician X the Antichrist?
 - Is new technology the mark of the beast?
 - Is global summit the one-world order?
 - Does birth of red heifer mean the end?
 - Is Feast of Trumpets the rapture?
 - Does Hebrew calendar give countdown?
- All these speculations = confusion of Israel's prophetic program with the Body's mystery program.
- Paul's teaching:
 - Church lives under revelation of the mystery, not prophecy.
 - Instructions are Pauline, not prophetic.
 - Rapture = secret revealed to Paul, not connected to prophetic calendars.
- Consequences of dragging prophecy into mystery:
 - Robs the church of blessed hope.
 - Substitutes fear and speculation for comfort.
 - Focus shifts from Christ to Antichrist.
 - Believers look for signs instead of the Savior.
- Answer:
 - Keep prophecy in Israel's program.
 - Keep mystery in the Body of Christ.
 - Right division removes endless speculation.
 - Restores true comfort: the rapture is imminent, sign-less, and always possible.