

# The Blessed Hope!

**“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)**

## *Diamond & Nugget #17*

The previous “Diamond & Nuggets” #12-16 were devoted specifically to the investigation of what basis there is for a True Pentecost and all the evidence to support a Pentecost that followed 50 days later than the Traditional Pentecost. The Bible yields what I see as more than circumstantial evidence to support a July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 “high watch” date for the Rapture of the Bible-believing Bride-Church.

When we have digested the astronomical data that Luis Vega provided us in his two celestial studies, we are encouraged to be awake, alert, and at work. I know the risk of disappointment that can cause many to feel reticent or reluctant about allowing their hopes to be built up fearing the possibility that July 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> could come and go. Yet we might end up still being here. I would remind you that God has called us to “watch” **10X** in Matthew; **8X** in Mark; and **3X** in Luke, for a total of **21X (7 X 3)** times in the Gospels. Yes, even the very instruction **“to watch”** bears God’s own “Heptadic Design Feature”! Come Lord Jesus!

Although, for more than forty years, I held the view that Rosh Hashanah (also known as the Feast of Trumpets or Yom Teruah) was the likely date for the Rapture, I did so on the basis of the twelve “idioms” associated with the New Moon and the Feast of Trumpets being the “unknown” day that Tishri 1 seemed to fit *“just right”* for the date of the Rapture, you know like the children’s story of Goldilocks and Three Bears. I’m not saying that is incorrect, but rather that I may not have thoroughly recognized how confused the church has been on the meaning of Leviticus 23:15-16.

## **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**

The **“blessed hope”** -(Titus 2:13) was much on the minds of the believers at Thessalonica. In the short time Paul was in Thessalonica, he taught believers much about eschatology. But because he spent such a short period of time with them, it kept them from grasping many of the perplexities about this **“hope”** answered by Paul before he was forced to leave Thessalonica. So, Paul deals with them in greater detail through his two letters to them.

### **1. The Reassurance About the Hope -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13,14)**

The concerns of the believers at Thessalonica about the Lord's return were doubtless conveyed to Paul through Timothy after Timothy visited the Thessalonians at Paul's request. Before Paul gets into the details about the **"blessed hope"** -(Titus 2:13), namely, the Rapture, he first reassures the Thessalonian believers about the hope.

- **The reassurance about revelation.** Paul has two significant reasons for further informing the Thessalonians about the **"blessed hope."** This should reassure the Thessalonians that Paul is not going to leave them in the dark about their questions concerning eschatology. **First**, Paul did not want them to be unaware. **"I would not have you to be ignorant"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13). He did not want the Thessalonian believers to be ignorant of important truths concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This desire is seldom seen today. Many believers today seem unconcerned about their own spiritual ignorance when it comes understanding to many doctrines. Modern Christianity has become more like cafeteria style Christianity; i.e., pick and choose what one wants to believe. **Second**, Paul did not want them to be unhappy. **"That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13). Ignorance of the truth can produce unnecessary sorrow. Paul did not want the Thessalonian believers to be sad. They needed to and should be joyous. It was the **"blessed hope"** not a "burdensome hope."
- **The reassurance about resurrection.** The main concern the Thessalonian believers had about the Rapture was about the believers who had already died, namely, **"them which are asleep"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13). **First**, the prerequisite for the resurrection: **"If [since] we believe that Jesus died and rose again"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:14), then the qualification for the resurrection was **faith** in Jesus Christ. **Second**, the promise of the resurrection: **"Them... which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:14), then the promise is that those who have already died who were saved will not miss out on the Rapture. Paul will speak of this again later. The word **"asleep"** here refers to the physical body. It is a figure of speech used for those who have died because the dead are laying down as if they were asleep. It does not refer to the soul. The soul is very conscious after death -(see Luke 16:19-31; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:8; and Philippians 1:23).

## 2. The Reappearing in the Hope -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16,17)

When Scripture speaks of the Second coming (be it the Rapture or the Resurrection), it sometimes speaks of the appearing of the Lord. We use the word **"reappearing"** because Christ first appeared in the first advent - so in the second advent (either the Rapture or Resurrection), Christ will be **"reappearing."**

- **The attraction in the reappearing.** **"The Lord himself"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16). The main attraction in eschatology is Jesus Christ. Many folks get excited about the particulars of eschatology but not about the Person of eschatology. Paul speaks in another epistle about those who **"love His appearing"** -(2<sup>nd</sup>

Timothy 4:8) to emphasize that the main attraction is Jesus. When I was 8 or 9, my older cousin would take my sister and I to the movie theater on Saturday morning. There would be film news, followed by a couple cartoons, a short segment of coming previews, and sometimes a short movie, followed by the "main attraction". A trip to the movies was something big back in the late 1940's. I have fond memories of those days, but the point is we were there to see the main attraction. We are not much different from those early believers of Thessalonica, awaiting the Lord, filled with excitement and emotion at the thought of seeing His presence.

- **The action in the reappearing. "Descend"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16). The Lord will come down from heaven to gather the saints in the Rapture.
- **The area of the reappearing. "In the air"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17). An important distinction is noted here about the Rapture in contrast to the Revelation. In the Rapture, Christ does not come to terra firma (the earth) but only comes to meet the saints **"in the air"**. When He comes back in the Revelation (the second aspect of the second advent), He will come to earth and His feet will touch down on the earth at the Mount of Olives -(Zechariah 14:4).
- **The accompaniments of the reappearing. "With a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16). Some believe the Rapture is secret and only the redeemed will know about it in the moment that it occurs. But Scripture indicates that the Rapture will be very audible. Unbelievers' ears may be closed, but Scripture does not suggest that action. Our text speaks of three accompaniments to the Rapture which all indicate that the Rapture will be very audible. **First**, the shout: **"With a shout"**. The word **"shout"** here indicates that which is like a military command. It is a shout of authority. It is a shout that literally commands the gathering of the saints. It is an irresistible command. All saints will respond to it instantly. **Second**, the sound: **"With the voice of the archangel"**. The word **"voice"** here comes from the Greek word which gives us the English word, "phone" which basically means sounds. The only angel in Scripture called the archangel is Michael -(Jude 1:9). **Third**, the signal: **"With the trump of God"**. A trumpet will pierce the air with sound during the Rapture. It is fitting to have the trumpet sound in the Rapture in relation to the assembling of the saints, for trumpets have often been used for assembling people. Those who have served in the Army, and perhaps other branches, know that when recall is sounded on a military post, everyone on foot or in a vehicle stops and salutes as recall is played on loud speakers around an Army base.

### **3. The Rising in the Hope -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:15-17)**

The first thing that happens after the Lord descends from heaven is the raising of the dead: **"the dead in Christ shall rise first"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16).

- **The perplexity about the raising.** As we have noted earlier, the Thessalonian believers were perhaps overly concerned, but concerned nonetheless, about the believers who had died. Would they miss out on the glorious Rapture? Paul specifically deals with this concern or perplexity by encouraging the Thessalonian believers and reminding them that those believers who had died will not miss out on the Rapture.
- **The people in the rising. "The dead in Christ shall rise"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16). The **"dead in Christ"** does not refer to carnal church members or to a



dead church that is doing nothing. It refers to those who have already died and who before they died received Jesus Christ as Saviour and, therefore, are **"in Christ"** though they be **"dead"** physically.

- **The procedure in the rising. "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16,17). The procedure is the **"dead"** first. **"We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep [dead physically]"**. -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:15). The separation in time between the raising of the dead and the living in meeting together with Christ is not a great deal of time. Perhaps mere seconds! The Rapture takes place very quickly -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:52), and this would greatly encourage the Thessalonian believers.
- 4. The Removing is the Hope -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17)**  
**"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17). The Rapture results in the removing of believers from the earth.
- **The multitude in the removing. "Then we which are alive and remain." First, the redeemed. "We"** refers to the redeemed, for Paul is included in the **"we."**

**Second**, the remaining. **"Alive and remain."** This speaks of the believers who are alive when the Rapture occurs. Every believer who has any sense at all wants to be in this category and thus skip the valley of death.

- **The moment of the removing. "Then."** As soon as the dead in Christ are risen, **"Then"** the living in Christ will be caught up to meet Christ. The **"Then"** will not be a long waiting period after the dead have been raised. As we noted earlier, the time of the Resurrection/Rapture events is very quick -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:52).



- **The manner of the removing. "Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds"** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17). This describes the manner of how the believing saints are removed from the earth. **First**, the catching is the manner. **"Caught up."** The word translated **"caught up"** means "to seize... to snatch or catch away" -(Thayer). In the word meaning, **"There is often the notion of a sudden swoop, and usually that of a force which cannot be resisted"**. **Second**, the companions in this manner. **"Together with them."** These words are critical in Paul's explanation to the Thessalonians, for they were sorrowing concerning those believers who had died -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13). This text says the believers who are alive at the Rapture will be reunited at the Rapture with the believers who had passed away before the Rapture. **Third**, the clouds in the manner noted: **"Caught up together with them in the clouds."** The article **"the"** before **"clouds"** is not in the Greek text, so it actually reads **"caught up together with them in clouds."** The clouds can refer to either the clouds in the atmosphere or more likely to the clouds of people gathered together in the Rapture.

- **The meeting in the removing.** *"To meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17). The meeting of Christ is the subject here. **First**, the place of the meeting, *"in the air"*. Somewhere in the atmosphere of earth there will be a great meeting of the saints gathered with the Savior. **Second**, the pleasantness of the meeting: *"The word translated as 'meeting' has been used to denote the reception of a newly arrived person or magistrate and that the reception is one of welcome"*. **Third**, the permanency of the meeting. *"So shall we ever be with the Lord."* There will be no more parting from the presence of Christ after this meeting. While that is the most important part of the permanency, it needs to be noted that it also means no more departure or separation from our believing loved ones, for they, too, will also be with the Lord forever.

#### 5. The Requirement From the Hope -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:18)

*"Wherefore comfort one another with these words"* -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:18). After Paul gave these wonderful promises, he then gave the Thessalonians a precept of duty.

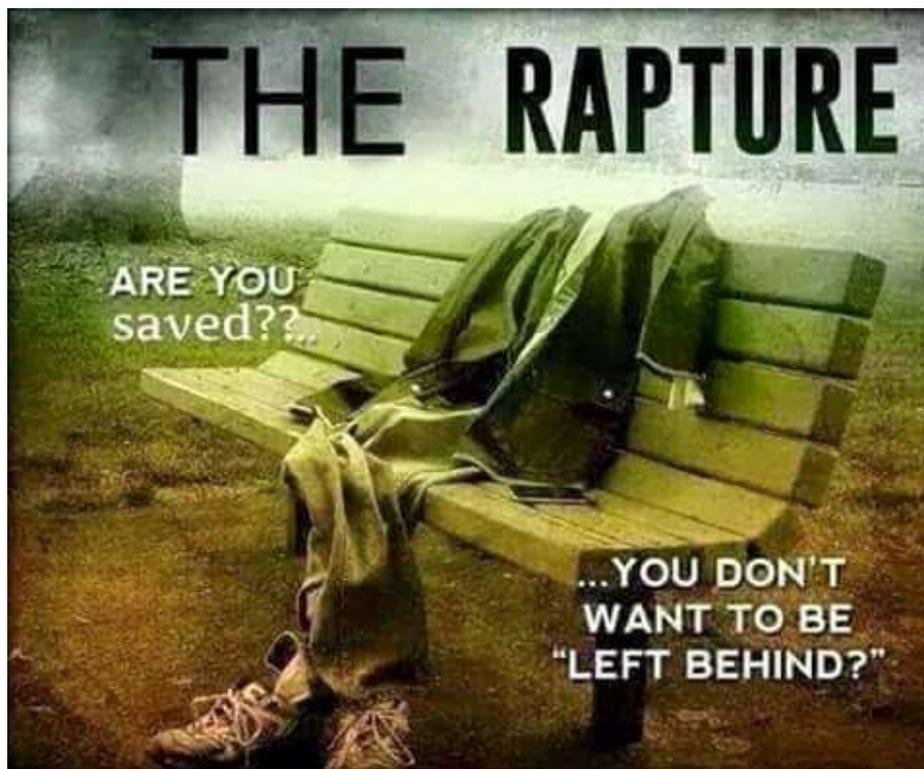
- **The place of the requirement.** There is an important principle here about requirement or responsibility following revelation. Promises bring precepts. Revelation brings responsibilities. God gives us revelation regarding the future but not without application for the present. This is easily sidestepped but we are given a task in the waiting period.
- **The particulars of the requirement.** *"Comfort one another with these words"* -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:18). This is not a difficult assignment but it is often neglected. **First**, the subject of *"Comfort"*. The word *"comfort"* means to aid, help, comfort, encourage". Unfortunately, too many saints are unpleasant or an annoyance and not comforters. **Second**, the society for comfort, *"One another"*. This refers to believers. Believers are to comfort other believers. The knowledge of the Rapture will be of no comfort to unbelievers. This comforting is only for believers. **Third**, the source of comfort, *"With these words"*. The best and most reliable source of comfort comes from the Word of God. If anyone questions that *"these words"* are the words of the Lord, then they should be directed to 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:15 which says *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord."* Paul spoke by revelation from God so he could truly say he was speaking the *"word of the Lord."*

If you have read all the Epistles or Letters of the Apostle Paul, you will never find him talking about the coming Great Tribulation period because Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week is reserved for the Nation of Israel. If the Apostle Paul had believed and taught a mid-tribulation rapture, a post-tribulation rapture, or an amillennial non-rapture, he would have simply told the Thessalonians that the rapture hadn't happened yet because XYZ hadn't happened yet. But, he didn't! He described the rapture as the next great event on the heavenly calendar. So encourage each other with these words.

Some will say there is no such thing as a rapture because the word “rapture” is not in the Bible. Strangely, they don’t hold the same opinion on common words like airplane, bike, computer ... yacht, x-ray, zipper, or even Biblical terminology like “trinity”. You get the idea. However, there is strong support for using the word “rapture” to describe the Rapture...

The Koine Greek of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17 uses the verb form **ἄρπαγησόμεθα** (*harpagisometha*), which means “**we shall be caught up**” or “**taken away**”, with the connotation that this is a sudden event. The dictionary form of this Greek verb is **harpazō** (**ἄρπάζω**). This use is also seen in such texts as Acts 8:39; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:2-4 and Revelation 12:5.

The Latin Vulgate translates the Greek **ἄρπαγησόμεθα** as **rapiemur**, from the verb **rapio** meaning “to catch up” or “take away”. “Rapture” is derived from Middle French *rapture*, via the Medieval Latin **raptura** (“seizure, kidnapping”), which derives from the Latin **raptus** (“a carrying off”).



Blessings in His Precious Name, Jesus Christ

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