

# 1 Thessalonians chapter 4

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The nature and timing of the believer's rapture and Christ's return

The rapture of believers at Christ's return is seen by many as the doctrinal basis of the rapture of the church. However, regarding the timing and nature of the rapture, premillennials believe that the rapture occurred before Christ's return and is usually associated with the great tribulation, subdivided into pre-tribulation rapture, tribulation rapture, or post-tribulation rapture. Postmillennials and nonmillennials question the literal nature of the rapture, arguing that the passage may be symbolic rather than a specific event. Is the rapture a specific event independent of Christ's return? The aerial encounter mentioned in the scriptures is literally (believers are elevated to heaven, both dead and alive) to experience this event at the same time. Paul mentions that the dead believers will first be resurrected and then raptured with the living. Resurrection is an immediate spiritual resurrection, a physical resurrection, and these perspectives influence believers' understanding of death, mourning, and hope, and how churches can comfort bereaved congregations.

The nature of Christ's return will be an obvious event visible to all mankind. The Bible emphasizes that He "came in the clouds of heaven" and that "all eyes will see Him, and even those who pierce Him will see Him." This coming is different from the humility of His first birth, but the glory of the King of kings full of glory, power, and judgment. Christ's return will bring the final judgment, judging the living and the dead, destroying Satan's kingdom, and establishing God's kingdom on earth. At the same time, for believers, it is salvation and physical transformation to meet the Lord. The Bible speaks of coming "like a thief," and no one knows the day and hour (Matthew 24:36), emphasizing that Christ's return was sudden and unpredictable. Stage 1: Christ greets the church in the air (rapture). Phase 2: After the Tribulation, Christ comes to earth with the victorious saints, bringing about the Last Judgment and the Millennial Kingdom. No one knows the exact date: Jesus makes it clear that "no one knows the day and the hour, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father"

(Matthew 24:36). The Bible prophesies that there will be many worldly disasters and omens before Christ's return—such as the appearance of false Christs, wars, earthquakes, famine, the spread of the gospel throughout the world, persecution of the faith, apostasy, etc. Christians should always be vigilant and ready to welcome the Lord's return and live a life that glorifies God and benefits others. The Bible advises believers not to speculate on the exact timing of Christ's return, focusing on vigilance and faithfulness.

Taken together, the exact timing of Christ's return will be an important event that will be public, glorious, and will be fulfilled at the same time as judgment and salvation, but the Bible prophesies many signs related to the end times. The real focus is on the preparation and vigilance of believers, the practice of faith, and the awaiting of the glory of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4 can be divided into three main themes: holy living, God's own love, and the hope of resurrection. Paul encourages believers to live a life that pleases God, and even more so where they have already done well. He emphasized that God calls believers to "become holy and shun fornication", not to indulge in lust and evil desires, and to protect their bodies with holiness and dignity. Do not bully one another brother, for the Lord will punish those who do these bad things. Paul reminds us that God calls us to be holy; To reject holiness is to reject God. Paul encourages believers to aspire to be quiet people, to take care of their own affairs, to work with their own hands, to bear witness to a proper life, and to avoid becoming a burden to others. Paul comforts believers who are grieving over death: "We do not want you to be ignorant as those who have no hope when it comes to those who have fallen asleep." The hope of Christians is that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, God will bring those who have slept in Jesus with him." When the Lord returns, He will come down from heaven Himself with commands, the voice of the archangel, and the sound of trumpets. Those who die in Christ will be raised up first, and then the surviving believers will be lifted up with them into the clouds, and will meet the Lord in the air, and will be with the Lord forever.

We pray

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank You for calling us not to be defiled, but to live a holy life. Lord, Your will is for us to be holy, to shun all fornication, not to indulge in the lusts and passions of the flesh, like the Gentiles who do not know You.

Help us to cleanse our hearts and minds, to keep our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, and to treat ourselves and others with honor and reverence. May we not be attracted by the temptations of this world, and may we not be dragged by selfish desires.

Lord, please give us a heart of self-control, so that we can walk in love, respect our brothers and sisters around us, and do not let lust defile our actions. Let us remember that we are Yours and have been redeemed by the Blood.

May Your Holy Spirit remind us every day to live a holy life, to always be vigilant and prayerful, and to stay away from temptation and temptation, so that we may be blameless before You and prepare for the day when the Lord returns.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
amen.

1 Thessalonians 4

Amplified Bible

### **Sanctification and Love**

**4** Finally, believers, we ask and admonish you in the Lord Jesus, that you follow the *instruction* that you received from us about how you ought to walk and please God (just as you are actually doing) and that you excel even more and more [pursuing a life of purpose and living in a way that expresses gratitude to God for your salvation]. **2** For you know what commandments *and* precepts we gave you by the *authority of* the Lord Jesus. **3** For this is the will of God, that you be sanctified [separated and set apart from sin]: that you abstain *and* back away from sexual immorality; **4** that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor [being available for God's purpose and separated from things profane], **5** not [to be used] in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God *and* are ignorant of His will; **6** and that [in this matter of sexual misconduct] no man *shall* transgress and defraud his brother because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we have told you before and solemnly warned you. **7** For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness [to be dedicated, and set apart by behavior that pleases Him, whether in public or in private]. **8** So whoever rejects *and* disregards this is not [merely] rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you [to dwell in you and empower you to overcome temptation].

**9** Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for *anyone* to write you, for you have been [personally] taught by God to love one another [that is, to have an unselfish concern for others and to do things for their benefit]. **10** For indeed you already do practice it toward all the <sup>[a]</sup>believers throughout Macedonia [by actively displaying your love and concern for them]. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, that you excel [in this matter] more and more, **11** and to make it your ambition to live quietly *and* peacefully, and to mind your own affairs and work with your hands, just as we directed you, **12** so that you will behave properly toward outsiders [exhibiting good character, personal integrity, and moral courage worthy of the respect of the outside world], and be dependent on no one *and* in need of nothing [be self-supporting].

### **Those Who Died in Christ**

**13** Now we do not want you to be uninformed, believers, about those who are asleep [in death], so that you will not grieve [for them] as the others do who have no hope [beyond this present life]. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again [as in fact He did], even so God [in this same way—by raising them from the dead] will bring with Him those [believers] who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **15** For we say this to you by the Lord's [own] word, that we who are still alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede [into His presence] those [believers] who have fallen asleep [in death]. **16** For the Lord Himself will come down from

heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the [b]archangel and with the [blast of the] trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain [on the earth] will *simultaneously* be caught up (raptured) together with them [the resurrected ones] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord! <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort *and* encourage one another with these words [concerning our reunion with believers who have died].

## 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4 – Detailed Explanation

### ✦ Overview

This chapter contains Paul's instructions to believers about:

1. Living a holy life
2. Loving one another and living responsibly
3. Understanding what happens to believers who die before Christ's return

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### ◆ 1. Living in Holiness (Verses 1–8)

#### Main point:

Paul urges the Thessalonian believers to **live in a way that pleases God**, especially by staying sexually pure.

- **“God’s will is that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.”** (v.3)
- Christians should **control their own bodies** in holiness and honor, not in **lustful passion** like the non-believers (v.4–5).
- Anyone who rejects this teaching is not rejecting a human command but **God Himself**, who gives the Holy Spirit (v.8).

#### Background note:

The Greco-Roman society was highly permissive about sexuality, so Paul's command to **abstain from sexual immorality** and live **holy, disciplined lives** was a radical call for Christian distinctiveness.

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### ◆ 2. Loving Others & Living Respectfully (Verses 9–12)

#### Main point:

Paul commends their love for each other, but he urges them to grow even more in this love.

- **“You yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”** (v.9)

- He encourages them to **live quietly, mind their own business, and work with their hands**, so they can win the respect of outsiders and **not be dependent on anyone** (v.11–12).

**Meaning:**

Christian faith isn't just about private belief; it should affect how one lives in society—with **love, diligence, and a good reputation** among non-believers.

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◆ **3. Comfort About the Dead and the Return of Christ (Verses 13–18)**

**Main point:**

Paul addresses concerns about Christians who had died—what would happen to them when Jesus returns?

- “Do not grieve like those who have no hope.” (v.13)
- Just as **Jesus died and rose again**, so **those who have died in Christ will be raised** when He returns (v.14).
- The **dead in Christ will rise first**, then living believers will be **caught up (raptured)** to meet the Lord in the air (v.16–17).
- “And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (v.17)

**This teaching brings comfort and hope.**

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✚ **Theological Significance**

**1. Sanctification and Christian Ethics**

- God's will for every believer is **sanctification**—growing in holiness.
- Paul emphasizes the importance of **sexual purity**, showing that our **bodies matter** and are to be used in **honor and holiness**.
- This connects with the idea that the **Holy Spirit dwells in believers** and empowers them to live differently from the world.

**2. Christian Love and Daily Witness**

- Love is both a **gift from God** and a **command to obey**.
- Christians should live peaceful, hardworking lives—not idle, loud, or burdensome—so that **the world sees Christ** in their conduct.
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