



Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety? (Part I)

1 Thessalonians 4:17: (NASB) *Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*



Christianity is divided into many denominations and groups. These divisions create a wide variety of teachings that elicit a wide variety of reactions. Take the rapture as an example. In its basic form, it interprets the Scriptures to say that Jesus returns with a shout and a trumpet. He raises the dead Christians to him first, and then all those faithful ones who are still living will be dramatically and immediately taken up to him as well. For both Christians and non-Christians, the drama of this view brings eye rolls and disdain from some, excitement and anticipation from some and absolute fear and trauma from others. The rapture teaching is based on a few scriptures. The big question is, does

this teaching fit squarely with the original Christian doctrine we learn from the Bible?

We just described the “classic” rapture idea made popular by books and movies whereby Jesus suddenly and dramatically returns to earth to collect his church. The faithful ones do not die, but are snatched up into heaven and the unbelievers are “left behind” to experience extreme tribulation. This is a popular teaching in the United States. We will talk more about its origin in other parts of this series.

This term “rapture anxiety” has been around for a while but has come to our attention in a CNN.com article dated September 27, 2022, called, “For some Christians, ‘rapture anxiety’ can take a lifetime to heal.”

To summarize, former Evangelicals calling themselves “Exvangelicals” and other denominations say they experience “religious trauma” from this idea of a rapture. It is also being called “End Times Anxiety.” We will talk more about this as we move forward, but to get started it is important to know that the concept of a rapture is defined in many different ways by different Christian denominations. However, they all start with one main verse:



1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: (NASB) ¹⁵*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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

Taken in a literal way, these scriptures describe a very dramatic and closely-spaced series of world-changing events. We will review these in detail over the course of this series.

Here are two other scriptures that are often cited as supporting a rapture teaching.

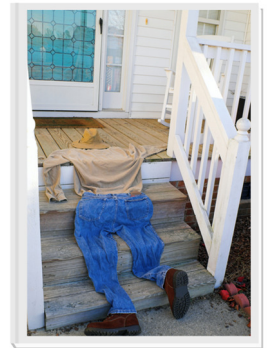
First, Paul is writing about the mystery of the spiritual resurrection:
1 Corinthians 15:51-52: (NASB) ⁵¹*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

This looks like an instantaneous change that reflects the previous scripture.

Second, Jesus prophesying his own return:
Matthew 24:36-41: (NASB) ³⁶*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father alone. ³⁷For the coming of the son of man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.*

Again, this text seems to indicate the snatching away of some and not others. The anxiety people experience comes a lot from this Matthew prophecy.

(Source: CNN article “For some Christians, ‘rapture anxiety’ can take a lifetime to heal.”) “...a latent fear of an impending, inevitable end - are very common among communities of religious trauma survivors. On social media, former church members recall being tricked by church leaders into watching violent rapture-themed films or crying themselves to sleep thinking about people and pets that would be left behind when the end finally came. Chelsea Wilson of Marietta, Georgia, tells CNN that while growing up in an evangelical community, talk of the rapture was so intrinsic that children would play pranks to scare each other into believing everyone around them had been raptured.”



“Survivors also cite the influence of fiction works, like the *Left Behind* book series and the 2000 movie adaptation, which they say were presented in their church circles as accurate glimpses into a post-rapture future. These works have reached such a level of infamy in these faith communities that some survivors say the descriptions of suffering and terror in the series greatly influenced their rapture-related fears.”

There is a lot of online buzz around rapture anxiety; for example, we quote a Reddit post from the handle (user name) “snowborn 77.” “When I was a kid, I was certain that the world would end before I even turned 18. Every time my mom went out and was even five minutes late in coming back, I got anxious that she had been raptured and that I would eventually be tortured to receive the mark of the beast on my forehead. I would turn on the radio to see if there were any reports in the news of people disappearing. I had dreams about running in the woods and hiding from the agents of the antichrist running around with ‘666’ branding irons. The only assurance I got that the rapture had not happened was if I saw or heard an airplane in the sky, although that could have just meant that the pilot was not a Christian. This was pretty traumatic in retrospect.”



There are many different variations of the rapture teaching. Here are some of the main differences:

1. The return of Jesus - the second advent:

His first advent was on earth as a man. He lived and died on the cross. Jesus returns a second time:

- Some say as a resurrected spirit being.
- Others expect him to again take the form of a human man. (We understand him to return as a spirit being.)

2. The purpose of Jesus' return:

Many agree the purpose is to gather his faithful followers and to judge the rest of the world:

- Some believe physical Israel to be involved, some do not. These beliefs include: the regathering of the Jewish people to a restored Israel (which already happened in 1948) and converting Jewish people to Christianity. Others do not believe literal Israel is involved in the End Times.

3. How many times Jesus returns:

- Once: He gathers his followers and judges the rest of the world at the same time.
- Twice: There are two returns to accomplish these two tasks: first for the rapture and second to defeat Satan.
- Once, but in two separate stages: The first stage is a secret rapture to carry away the saved to heaven. The second phase is when Jesus comes back with his church.

(We understand there to be one return in three separate stages, not two.)



**Episode 1185:
What Are the True Reasons
for Jesus' Return to Earth?**

Uncovering the remarkable and inspiring mission of Jesus' return

We strongly recommend listening to Ep.1185 for more.

FIRST Advent	SECOND Advent
Jesus came to PAY the ransom for Adam's sin. Without this, nothing else could happen.	Jesus returns to APPLY the ransom for Adam's sin.
Jesus came to offer Israel deliverance as their Messiah.	Jesus returns to restore and deliver Israel.
Jesus came to call out a people FOR his name from the Jews first, and then from the Gentiles.	Jesus returns to bring all people TO his name through his "called-out" ones, his faithful followers.
Jesus came to convict Satan and declare the end of his reign of evil.	Jesus returns to build "new heavens" and a "new earth" without Satan's influence.
Jesus came to heal and teach Israel so the people would recognize him as their Savior.	Jesus returns to heal and teach ALL nations so they will recognize and follow him as their Redeemer and obey God as their Sovereign Ruler.



The biggest differences between those who believe the rapture will happen is **WHEN** does Jesus return to gather his faithful followers in relation to other time markers of the End Times?

Main Variation #1:

Does Jesus return before, during or after the time of tribulation?

Main Variation #2:

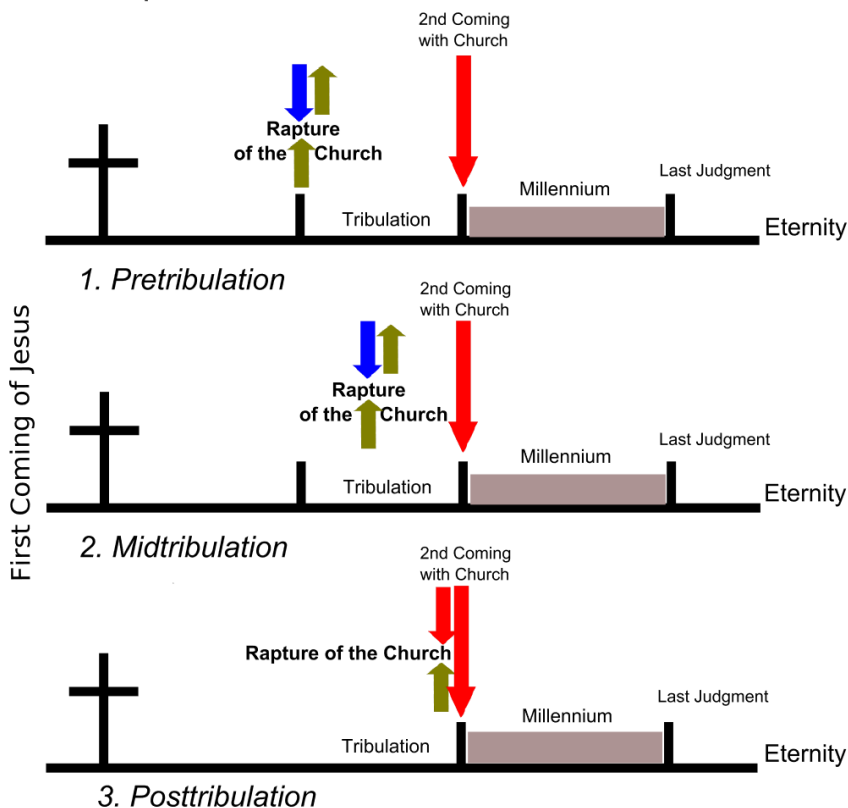
Does Jesus return before, during or after the millennial kingdom?

Let's look closer at the first variation:

Does Jesus return before, during or after the time of tribulation?

Daniel 12:1 describes a *time of trouble*. Revelation 7:14 describes a *great tribulation*. There are other scriptures that talk about this difficult time, and people differ on how long it will be.

Comparison of Christian Tribulation Views



- “Classic” rapture teaching is considered **pretribulation**. In this view, the rapture is a separate and distinct event from the second coming. Looking at a timeline from left to right, the faithful are raptured into heaven, followed by a time of trouble or tribulation on earth for some period of time (this varies but most think it will be for seven years), and after tribulation, Jesus returns with his church for judgment of the world. The true followers of Jesus do not go through the time of tribulation because they are taken away in the clouds beforehand, but they return to earth when the tribulation is over.

- **Posttribulation** rapture teaching says the rapture and second coming happen at the same time, **AFTER** the tribulation is over. The church, therefore, goes through the tribulation.

- **Midtribulation** rapture teaching says the tribulation starts, and at some point before it ends, the rapture occurs. The second coming happens when the tribulation is over. Therefore, the rapture and second coming are separate and distinct events.

Sprinkle into this the time marker of the antichrist revealed, whether there will be an evil one-world government and there is a lot of variation of belief!

Chart source: Lamorak, CC BY-SA 3.0,
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There are a lot of perspectives - how do we know what is true? There are several questions that we will answer throughout the three-part series by thoroughly and methodically going through the applicable scriptures.

Questions that need answering:

1. What is the reason the Apostle Paul is writing this to the church at Thessalonica?
2. Does this all happen in a simultaneous manner when Jesus makes his "grand entrance" back to earth?
3. Does Jesus literally shout as the archangel and carry God's literal trumpet?
4. Do the dead Christians from the past 2,000 years all rise in an instant?
5. For those Christians alive at this event, are their human lives instantly ended once the others have been raised?
6. What does being *caught up together with them in the clouds* mean?
7. How is all of this comforting and not traumatizing?



QUESTIONS THAT
NEED ANSWERING:

**Rapture
Reassessment:**



As we can see, the Scriptures point to some very dramatic events that are involved with Jesus' return. Now is when the careful study begins because we know the events being described can only be properly interpreted by using scriptural context, along with a clear understanding of the "how" and "why" of Jesus' return.

Such a big subject! So many questions! So many contradictory ideas! So much anxiety! So much to learn!

Was the reason the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church to teach them about the traumatic events of the rapture?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the brotherhood in Thessalonica out of a deep and abiding love. The book of 1 Thessalonians overflows with affection and fond memories of how they came to accept the gospel in the midst of trials. Paul lamented over his inability to go and see them again and spoke of the relief he had after he sent Timothy to check on their spiritual welfare. Paul wrote them to encourage their faithfulness.

At the end of 1 Thessalonians 3, we read what Paul wants to next encourage them with.

As Paul is ready to delve into future details, he expressed the profound joy their faithfulness gave him:

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13: (NASB) ⁹For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, ¹⁰as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

As we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face - we can sense the Apostle's deep attachment to these brethren.



Next, he expresses his deep desire to see them:

¹¹Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;

Paul prays in a similar manner as Jesus did in Luke 22:42 - *nevertheless, Thy will be done.*

He then sets his upcoming direction as he looks to the return of Jesus:

¹²and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; ¹³so that he may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Verse 13 is a transition into a part of the doctrine of the gospel. We will come back to this later, as the verse is foundational in the determination of the return of Jesus.

Perhaps Paul is setting out to accomplish two things:

- First, he will be teaching the Thessalonian brethren about important future events involving the Lord's return.
- Second, he may be setting up encouragement for them to stand strong in the event he cannot physically see them again, by reminding them that they will all be united in Christ when the Lord returns.

Let's pause here to look again at the rapture viewpoint. We said earlier there were two main variations:

Main Variation #1:

Does he return before, during or after the time of tribulation?

Main Variation #2:

Does he return before, during or after the millennial kingdom?

Let's look closer at the second variation:

Does he return before, during or after the millennial kingdom?

To answer this, we first have to understand what is meant by "millennial kingdom" or "the millennium" in the book of Revelation. (The understanding of Christians varies here too.)

- A. Some believe it is a literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus and his church on earth.
- B. Others believe it is a figurative period of time, like saying "a long time."

The Catholic and Lutheran churches (and others) are considered "Amillennialists," in that they do not view the millennium as pertaining to a literal thousand years; but rather as symbolic, and see the kingdom of Christ as already present in the church beginning with the Pentecost in the book of Acts.

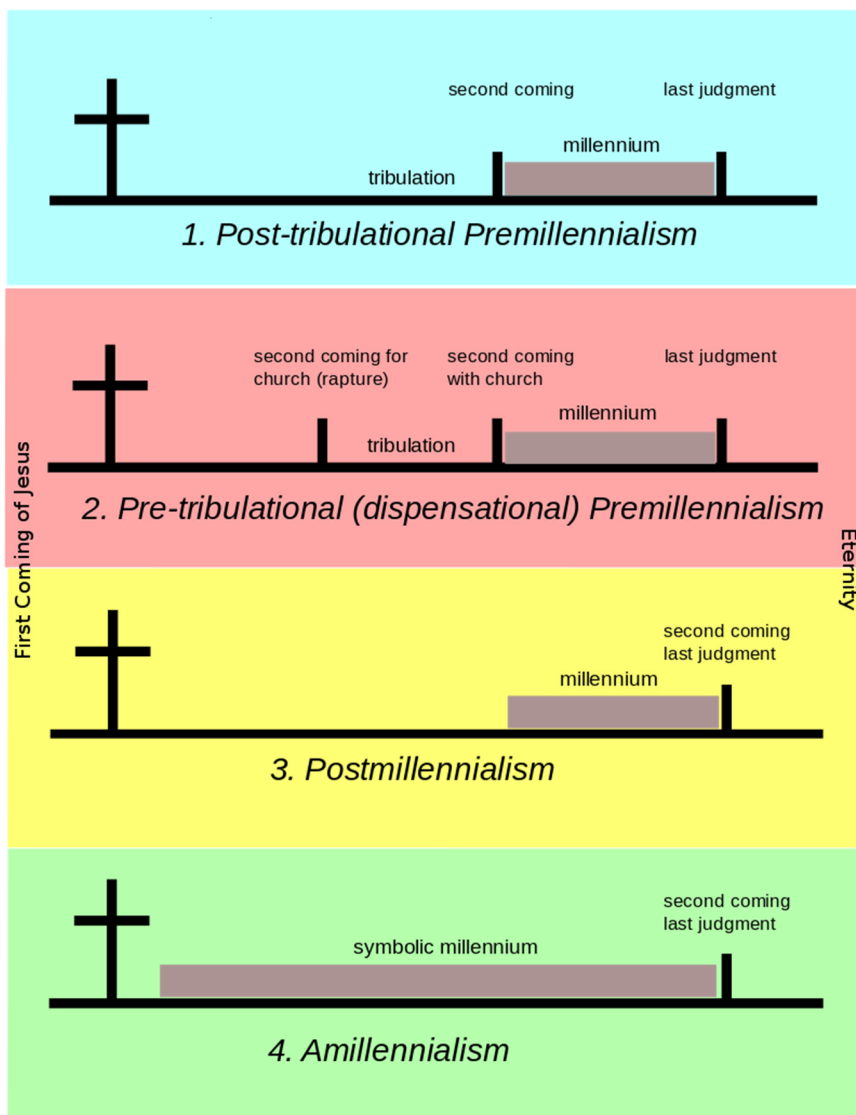
We understand there to be a literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus which begins at his second advent. Satan's binding is also taking place during this period of time, according to Revelation 20:1-8.

Does he return before, during or after the millennial kingdom?

A. Some say the rapture happens BEFORE both the tribulation and the millennium. Theologically, this is called “**premillennialism**.” For the last century, this belief has been common among Evangelical Christians. And as we already said, some believe in either pretribulational, posttribulational or midtribulational premillennialism, depending on where on the stream of time you place the End Time markers.

B. Others say “**postmillennialism**” is correct. They say the rapture occurs AFTER both the tribulation and the millennium because Jesus returns AFTER the millennium.

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



The phrase “social gospel” is popular among those holding to the postmillennialism belief, which includes the idea that faithful Christians can force the kingdom to happen by their actions. This is one reason we are seeing Christian churches (especially here in the United States) getting involved in politics to lobby governments towards godliness.

A postmillennialist might say it is our job to root out all evils so that Christ can return and set up his kingdom - like a renovation of society. If we can clean everything up, then Christ will return.

As we can see, there are a lot of perspectives among millions of Christians who believe in these variations of viewpoints. But what do the Scriptures actually say?

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Chapter 4 continues with Paul exhorting them to continue in a high standard of personal moral living:

1 Thessalonians 4:1: (NASB) *Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.*

The Thessalonians were working hard, but they should work harder, do more and *excel still more*.

This high standard should extend to how they treat each other:

1 Thessalonians 4:6: (NASB) *and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.*

Apply this highest standard of personal integrity and responsibility to all men:

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12: (NASB) *¹¹and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, ¹²so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*

Paul is saying faithfulness has its rewards:

1. Excel in our spiritual growth.
2. Be clear in our relationships with the brotherhood.
3. Have integrity when you deal with the world (outsiders).

With the required Christlike standards in place, Paul next unfolds another form of higher living - having hope.

There is hope for their loved ones who have died, based on their Christian faith:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: (NASB) *¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

Various Bible commentaries say those in this church were mourning the untimely death of their friends.

(Source: Pulpit Commentary) They expected that Christ would come immediately and establish his kingdom on earth, and consequently they feared that those who had died would be excluded from it.

The Christian faith was new at this time, and Paul specifically did not want these new Christians to feel the grief others felt when those close to them died. Because Jesus died and rose again, those faithful who died would be the first receiving their heavenly reward.



Episode 900:
So, When Does the Rapture Happen?

Biblically defining texts that seem to teach a rapture



All of Paul's encouragement up to this point was built around living a Christlike life. This was about trading our human reactions for spiritual ones, like the human reaction of grief for those who died.

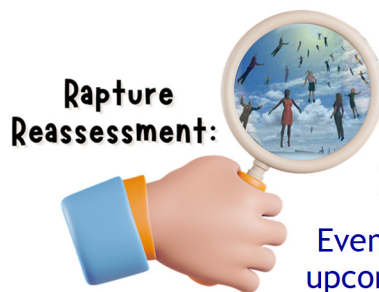
The Apostle gave the Thessalonians tremendous personal encouragement. They were to grow in the spirit, with the brotherhood, and in the way they treated others. Plus, in the trials of losing loved ones, they were not to despair because there was such hope because of the resurrection of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians is a letter of dramatic hope! Rapture teachings are not hopeful; rather, they appear scary. Paul's letter is ALL about encouragement! It has to do with walking in the footsteps of Jesus and understanding that blessings happen in the face of trials.

Paul will now instruct on some of the events surrounding the return of Jesus.

Are we supposed to worry in any way about what Paul wrote here? No!

1 Thessalonians is all about the encouragement of the body of Christ. This is a letter we should be able to read and feel better. Sometimes when people hear rapture teachings they feel worse, which is contrary to why Paul wrote the letter.



The context of this teaching by Paul is very positive and uplifting. His next point is meant to continue his very uplifting message. Because we know that God's plan for all of humanity is positive, how much more positive will this portion of the plan focusing on Jesus' followers be!

Even though there are both positive and negative responses to the upcoming verses, Paul has set the table for rejoicing in a big way.

The next verses are the basis for the rapture teaching. Do they all happen in a simultaneous manner when Jesus makes his "grand entrance" back to earth?

Here is where we need to slow down and focus in on the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul's next lessons are specific, detailed and need to be observed in the light of context and reason.

If we are causing or suffering from anxiety over our interpretation of what the Apostle Paul is teaching, there must be something wrong with that interpretation. These verses are purely inspirational. Some Christians might say the anxiety is due to lack of faith, but that is not the way the Apostle Paul is writing this. He is being very clear about what will happen so that all reading it may be encouraged, EVEN IF our faith is a little shaky. Any anxiety we feel should go away when we have the appropriate interpretation of Scripture.

Do all the things described in these "rapture" verses happen in a simultaneous manner? No.



Let's set the groundwork by re quoting 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 to show the spacing between events and the reasoning for our answers.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15: (Rotherham) ¹⁴For, if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, so, also will, God, bring forth with him, them who have fallen asleep through Jesus; ¹⁵For, this, unto you, do we say, by a word of the Lord, that, we, the living who are left unto the presence of the Lord, shall in nowise get before them who have fallen asleep;

This hints at a specific order of resurrection at the return of Jesus. Those faithful followers who fell asleep in death first will be raised first.

Many Christians assume that those faithful who died, such as the Apostle Paul, immediately went to heaven. But these verses tell us all are asleep in death awaiting the return of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, which we will discuss shortly, tells us that the resurrection - starting with resurrection of his faithful followers - is triggered by the return of Jesus.

This is a big point - when did people who died first start going to heaven? Jesus has to return first. If the return is yet future, the faithful deceased have to be still in their graves. We understand the first phase of his return has already happened, and the resurrection of the faithful has begun.

Comparing translations:

1 Thessalonians 4:15:

(NASB) ...that we who are alive and remain until the **coming** of the Lord.
(Rotherham) ...that we, the living who are left unto the **presence** of the Lord.

Which is correct?

the **coming** of the Lord (a future unfolding) OR

the **presence** of the Lord (an arrival has occurred)



We need to start with what happened when Jesus returned. How was the Apostle Paul referring to the return of Jesus here? This shows us the bigger picture of Paul's teaching. We will see that Jesus' presence is not a *coming* - a moment in time. It is a *presence* - a process of time.

Coming: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3952 *parousia*; a being near
The King James Version translates this word as "coming," "presence"

parousia comes from the following:

Near: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3918 *pareimi*; to be near, i.e. at hand

One example of "coming":

Philippians 2:12: (KJV) *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my **presence** <3952> only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Translating the word *presence* differently here to mean a future arrival would not make sense.




Revealing the three scripturally-progressive phases of Jesus' return



"Presence" indicates *a period of time*, NOT the moment of appearing

In the prophecy of his return, Jesus described it as the sun rising in the east and traveling through the sky:


Matthew 24:27: (NASB) *For just as the **lightning** <796> comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the **coming** <3952> of the Son of Man be.*

 **Is this word *coming* properly translated here? And why are we saying his return is like the sun when the verse we just read calls it *lightning*?**

Luke's account of the same verse will verify two critical points:

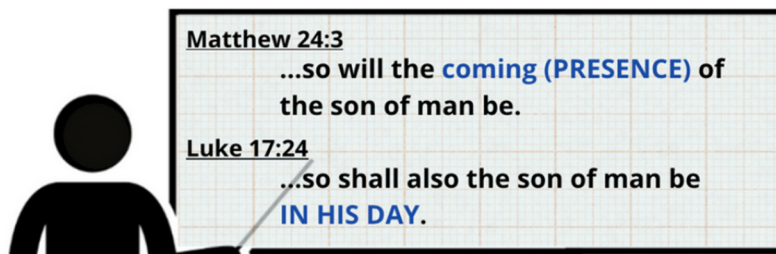
Luke 17:24: (KJV) *For as the **lightning** <796>, that **lighteneth** <797> out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.*

If I say, "...in the day of the king," it means during the time the king reigned - not some future time. *So shall also the Son of Man be in his day - in his day* means **WHEN HE IS HERE** - not on his way to arrive at a future time.

 *In his day* helps us properly translate the Matthew account. That Greek word, *parousia*, translated *coming* should actually be *presence* - it is *in his day*. Using *presence* verifies that Jesus was talking about conditions occurring **AFTER** his return - when he is actually here, NOT when he is on his way.

This is not just talking about the exact moment of his arrival. "In my grandfather's day" means all those long days my grandfather was living.

Presence **MUST** be the definition in Matthew for it to agree with Luke.



Matthew 24:3
...so will the **coming (PRESENCE)** of the son of man be.

Luke 17:24
...so shall also the son of man be **IN HIS DAY.**

Lightning: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #796 *astrape*; lightning; by analogy, glare

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) lightning 1a) of the gleam of a lamp

Lighteneth: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #797 *astrapto*; to flash as lightning; lighten, shine



Glare, gleam of a light - it is more than just a flash of light. Both Matthew and Luke appear to describe the sun's movement.

Comes from the east to the west - the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. There is a constant glare from the sun from the time it rises as it goes through its cycle.

One part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven - this definitely sounds like how the sun travels in our sky throughout the day. This seems more than a sudden flash of lightning.

It does not seem like there is a "grand entrance" of Jesus yet.

Like a sunrise gradually revealed over time, we are going to see how the second presence is at first faint and imperceptible. Then, it grows to a point of being obviously manifest. Finally, it rises to the full revelation of its power.

Like the sun, the second presence of Jesus is:



Let's look at the return of Jesus. Remember, the return means the *presence*, the time in which he is here, and NOT the moment he arrives, *coming*.

Jesus and Paul both told us that Jesus' presence begins in a thief-like manner:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2: (NASB) ¹Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ²For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.



Jesus' return begins quietly like a thief, like the faint cracks of dawn in the eastern sky! Have you ever sat and watched the sunrise? It literally begins in the dark.

Being like a *thief in the night* means you are in the house and nobody knows you are there. Jesus was in Satan's house (this present evil world) before anyone knew it. That is how he could begin binding Satan - by taking him by surprise.

The beginning of Jesus' return is as a thief in the night.





We suggest the return of Jesus happens in specific stages. To help us understand, we will tell a story (an analogy).

We are going to our friend's house for dinner. We walk in, but there is no food on the table, so we begin the visit by sitting and talking with each other. We do not know it, but in the kitchen, dinner is started; there is just no evidence or manifestation of it yet. All we know is that we are having a good time in our fellowship with one another.

This is like *a thief in the night*. Something is happening, but no one sees what is going on.

In Acts 1:11, the angel told the disciples that Jesus would return the same way he had ascended. How was that? Quietly, gently, not seen by outsiders, only seen by his chosen few, without fanfare. This implies that only those watching would see him return as a *thief in the night*. The key to seeing is through prophecy fulfilled and world events.

The second phase of Jesus' *parousia*, his return, is the manifestation or appearance of his presence. It is another Greek word, *epiphaneia*:

Appearance: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2015 *epiphaneia*; a manifestation, i.e. (specially) the advent of Christ (past or future)

The King James Version translates this word as appearing, brightness



With environmental exposures, there is often what is called a "latent manifestation" of disease. You might be exposed to a cancer-causing chemical today, for example, but the manifestation of the disease - such as the first time the cancer cells can be detected in your blood - might not show up for many years or even decades after the exposure. It exists but is not yet detectable. Symptoms of the disease are delayed.

In the case of the return of Jesus, the *parousia* started earlier but was hidden. Now the *epiphaneia* is finally detectable.

In other words, the presence is throughout the whole process, but it starts undetected like a thief. Then his presence goes through a phase where there are signs that something is happening.

Growing to a point
of being obviously manifest.



Paul speaks of the manifesting of the return of Jesus as a target for the faithful to watch:

1 Timothy 6:13-14: (NASB) ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the **appearing** <2015> (*epiphaneia*/manifestation) of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Why does it say “until the appearing” and not “until the return”?

Because Jesus’ return is a process that begins with the quiet first steps of dismantling this present evil world.

The “manifestation” phase is where the signs of his presence begin to show. Paul was not saying to be strong until Jesus returns, as no one knew when this would be - it was hidden. He was not saying, “Look forward to the event you are not going to see.” Rather, he was saying, “Look forward to the event for which you see the signs.”

What does all of this have to do with the teaching of a rapture?

If we understand how the return of Jesus is a process that develops over time, it means the events of the rapture that take place all at once cannot be true. It takes away the drama and the trauma. The rapture teaching does not fit with the definitions of the words describing his return.

This manifestation phase is where the signs of his presence start to be uncovered.

Here is a key point where we differ with some Christians who expect a rapture: We expect the present evil world to be completely dismantled and not renovated. Some

The return of Jesus is a process
few see. It begins with
the quiet first steps of dismantling
this present evil world.

Christians believe the world must be cleaned up in all respects - socially, environmentally and governmentally - before Jesus can return to usher in God’s kingdom. However, we can see all around us that the world overall is being torn down and not cleaned up. This is a necessary phase before God and Christ set up their holy government.



Back to our analogy of the dinner at our friend’s house: Now we smell something coming from the kitchen. We are still not sure what it is, but there is a manifestation, a sign, a signal that something really good is cooking. We still do not know what it is, but our mouths are starting to water! Everything does not happen during the one small instant of our arrival at the house.

Finally, we get to the third stage of Jesus’ presence/*parousia*, his revealing!

Revealed: (verb) Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #601 *apokalupto*; to take off the cover, i.e. disclose

The King James Version translates this as word “reveal”

An uncovering: (noun) Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #602 *apokalupsis*; disclosure

The King James Version translates this word as “appearing,” “coming,” “lighten,” “manifestation,” “be revealed,” “revelation”



By this point, these Greek words tell us “the lid is off!” We sat down at our friend’s table, dinner is served and the cover is removed. This is the best stew we have ever seen or smelled! It is revealed.

Let’s go back over this story.

- We went into the house knowing a dinner was coming, but there was no sign of it. We did not know what would be served.
- Then we saw signs - a whiff of smell, a look at the beautifully set table, and we knew something was cooking; a meal was being prepared for us.
- Then the lid came off, the food was revealed and it was obvious we were going to have a great dinner.



At this point, the lid is off, and all can see the whole truth:

Luke 17:26-27,30: (NASB) ²⁶And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the son of man: ²⁷they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all... ³⁰It will be just the same on the day that the son of man is **revealed <601>**.

That word revealed here is *apokalypto* - to disclose.

The *days of Noah* included all that happened before the Flood, during the Flood, and all that happened after. It was a long period of time.

Finally, rising to the full revelation of its power.



The day Jesus is seen by all for who he is includes all of the process of his return before that revelation. The process of his return is in place and working. It begins manifesting, and then everybody gets it!

The return is first quiet; very few know about it. Then it is slowly made manifest in small ways, then in larger ways.

It comes to a point where everybody will see it and understand what is going on:

Revelation 1:7: (NASB) Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen.

Every eye WILL see him, but only after he has come quietly, taken this world from Satan, gathered his true church and re-established Israel. Those are some of the main things that must happen. After the time of trouble that follows these things, Jesus will be revealed as King of Kings as he fully establishes God’s kingdom on earth and abolishes sin, sickness and death.

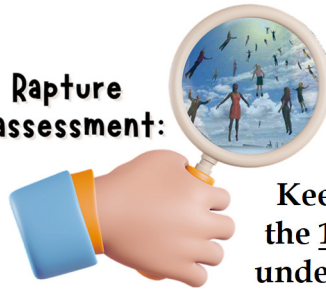
These verses help us understand that the return of Jesus is a process OF time, not a moment IN time. The rapture teaching says it is a moment in time, which we do not see as scriptural.

The process of the return of Jesus

PHASE 1 Parousia
PHASE 2 Epiphaneia
PHASE 3 Apokalupsis



**Rapture
Reassessment:**



Clearly the events the rapture teaching is built upon do NOT take place in a few crowded moments of time. The return of Jesus is a process, and God's plan - per its usual execution - unfolds piece-by-piece.

Keeping this unfolding process in mind will help us to see the 1 Thessalonians 4 scriptures as they were meant to be understood.

God's plan always takes longer than we think it should! This is the way He works. That is the way the return of Jesus works. It is part of God's plan, and the Scriptures prove it.

If we would just remember to take a breath and have faith in God and His plan, our anxiety over the details can begin to diminish!

When he returns, does Jesus literally shout as the archangel and carry God's literal trumpet?

Careful and contextual study helps us to see where and when things are symbolic in scripture and when they are to be taken literally. Because we have already established Jesus' presence - his *Parousia* - as beginning stealthily, this helps us to look at the next verses with a broader scriptural perspective.

Again, the return of Jesus is a process. This next verse is where the action begins! This is what causes anticipation, eye rolls or anxiety, depending on who you are. This verse describes some of the first things Jesus does when he returns in his thief-like manner.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: (NASB) *For the Lord himself (Jesus) will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

There are several elements here:

- *The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout*
- *with the voice of the archangel*
- *with the trumpet of God*
- *which causes the dead in Christ to rise first*

Let's look at this piece-by-piece to see what the verse is telling us. We do not want to look at it through the eyes of tradition or emotion.

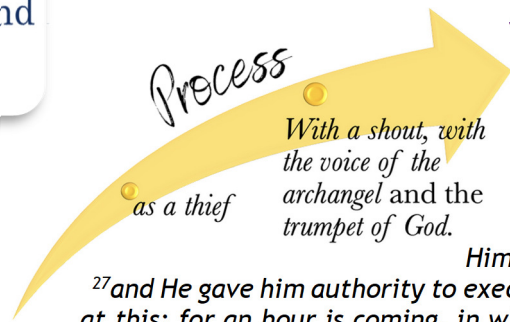
The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout

Shout: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2752 keleusma, or keuleuma; a cry of incitement

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: an order, command, specifically, a stimulating cry



Who is he shouting to?
Who is he commanding?



Jesus is described as returning both quietly like a thief in the night AND with a shout. How can they both be true?

Perhaps this command is the specific command Jesus himself described:

John 5:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the son also to have life in himself;

²⁷and He gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, ²⁹and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

This gives us the big picture. Jesus “triggers” or commands the resurrection of all because he died for everyone’s sins. *All who are in the tombs will hear his voice.* But there is an order to the resurrection, *those who did the good deeds*, which does not mean just being a good person. These are the true followers of Jesus compared to the “everybody else.”

The voice of Jesus calls all from their graves. Does he “shout” and everyone is raised simultaneously? No.

Other scriptures show us that his voice, his command, spans over time and addresses different classes of people:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23: (NASB) ²⁰But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: *Christ the first fruits*, *after that those who are Christ's at his coming* (presence - *parousia*),

As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive - Paul explains here that this “command” comes to each in his own order of resurrection:

1. Christ
2. The first fruits (those who are faithful unto death)
3. Those who are Christ's at his presence (the “everybody else” in the previous scriptures - they are “Christ's” because he ransomed them by taking the place of Adam)

Jesus' command has a specific objective. He commands each group in a specific order for a specific reason.

With the voice of the archangel - what does this mean?

As we will see, this voice is a pointed guidance for specific events, similar to that command:

Daniel 12:1: (NASB) *Now at that time Michael (the name means "who is like God"), the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people (Israel), will arise (to stand or move into action).*

This is an End Times prophecy. Another point we differ on from some Christians is that we see Michael as Jesus. There are five scriptural references of Michael the Archangel, and we will include more information in the **Bonus Material.**



Why does Jesus speak with *the voice of the archangel*?



That shout was to call those from the grave. It is not a shout the world will hear because it is a spiritual shout or command for spiritual activity. It is the same *with the voice of the archangel*.

The archangel is the highest authority who carries out the will of God. Jesus was the highest, strongest, most primary authority from the beginning of time through the rest of eternity. That is who he is - the one who always has and always will primarily accomplish the will of God. *The voice of the archangel* tells us this is the authority given by God.

Let's look at another manifestation of Jesus' presence - the nation of Israel. Israel's regathering has been a modern-day fulfillment of prophecy that continues to go unrecognized by the world.



One example is the prophecy of the *Valley of Dry Bones* in Ezekiel 37.

There we are given a picture of dry bones. God breathes on them and they add muscles, flesh and skin to come alive. The prophecy shows the steps

that bring the nation of Israel back to life. For centuries, the nation was dead - it did not exist. It was "dry bones."

This blatant prophecy of the re-establishment of Israel's dry bones given all those centuries ago is largely ignored by the world. This prophecy began to be fulfilled quietly in the latter part of the 1800s. 1878 was when the first *moshava* in Israel was established called *Petah Tikvah*. *Petah Tikvah* means "door of hope."

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary:

Moshava: noun

a settlement or colony of independent farmers in Israel who own and work their own land

The establishment of *Petah Tikvah* was an historic moment that almost nobody saw or understood. It was only at this point that the Jewish people were back in their own land after such a long time, with ownership of the land and as a result, the ability to work that land. God promised this so long ago, and it was the beginning of that promise of restoring those dry bones.

We believe this was the beginning of Michael arising or standing up. It was quiet and not seen by the world at large; rather, it was seen only through a spiritual understanding of the promise.

Dark clouds of trouble on the world stage and in the Middle East developed shortly after this in the early 1900s. Yet, this small beginning would reach a significant milestone 70 years later in 1948 when Israel became a nation. God's promises unfolded and His prophecies came to fruition because Michael began standing up.



Continuing:

Daniel 12:1: (NASB) *...And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time...*

This is not a short period of time, but describes the build up to and the time of trouble as foretold in Matthew 24.

...and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

By focusing in on the voice of the archangel, we see the symbols of the Thessalonian verses develop - the command for resurrection and now the standing up for and directing of God's chosen people back to their land just as God had said would happen so many centuries before.



We can see how the Apostle Paul knew the Old Testament prophecies and taught them to Christians. Paul's teaching to the Thessalonians was not some whimsical, magical moment. It was based on Old Testament prophecy and the unfolding of God's plan.

Daniel focused on the earthly resurrection:

Daniel 12:2: (NASB) *²Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

This is the resurrection of those to the earthly nature:

³Those who have insight (those who were already raised in the first resurrection) will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Unfortunately, we do not have the time to dissect all the details of Daniel 12. *Shine brightly* refers to the final stage of Jesus' *parousia*, his revealing. It alludes to the point in time when everyone knows Jesus has returned.

recap
recap

We have examined the many different viewpoints and opinions of those who believe in rapture teachings about how and when it will work. It seems there is a lot of disagreement in trying to understand it.

When we methodically examine the applicable scriptures, what do we see?

First, we see the return of Jesus is not a rushed event. It starts out quietly, like *a thief in the night*. It grows, becoming more manifest until it becomes a bright shining when everybody will obviously know he has returned. These stages are all part of the same single return, but they work as a process of gradual revealment.

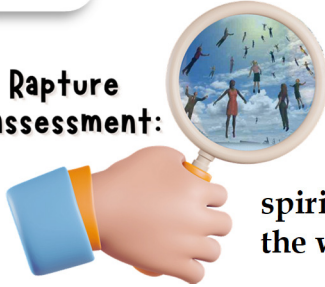
The Apostle Paul talks about the beginning of that process in 1 Thessalonians 4 which not everyone sees or understands, but it is quietly present.

He tells us of:

- *a shout* or command to the dead to come forth from the grave.
- *the voice of the archangel* - the putting in place the pieces, the events on the world stage, so that Israel could go back to their homeland like God promised.
- *the trumpet of God* - we will consider this piece in Part II.



Rapture Reassessment:



So far, we see a reason to relax. The return of Jesus should not be a moment that causes fear and anxiety.

Clearly the shout, the actions of the archangel and the trumpet which we will study in our next episode all carry highly spiritual significance. Their effects are only able to be seen by those who are directly affected and those who are specifically tuned into their true significance. By transforming these highly spiritual markers into worldly actions, the rapture teaching changes the whole meaning of Paul's teaching in Thessalonians.

These things are happening on a spiritual level. We do not see them; we do not literally hear the voice of the archangel. We do see and hear the manifestations of those actions, such as the reestablishment of Israel - a foretold sign of the return of Jesus! See [Matthew 24](#).

We need to reassess the rapture teachings with what is scriptural.

*So, do I suffer from rapture anxiety?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on December 19, 2022
Ep. 1260: Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety? (Part II)

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Another prophecy that helps us see the work of the return of Jesus to claim his church:

Malachi 3:1-4: (NASB) ¹Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.



True Christians ARE His temple:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.*

Who is Michael the Archangel?

There are five scriptural references to the archangel Michael. Michael's role in every occurrence is as a defender or supporter of God's people. He is acting on God's behalf. This extremely important work we believe is entrusted to Jesus.

1. **Daniel 10:13:** (KJV) *But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

Here Michael is recognized as one of the most chief of the angelic beings.

2. **Daniel 10:21:** (KJV) *But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.*

Here the angel speaking to Daniel is bearing witness to the fact that none are more knowledgeable than Michael. In both these texts (1. and 2. above), he is assisting the angel Gabriel who was being opposed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Gabriel was on a mission to help Daniel and explain the meaning of the visions he had been given.

3. **Daniel 12:1:** (KJV) *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

We understand the "children of thy people" to be referring to the Jewish nation. Here Michael stands up for Israel, Daniel's people. At Jesus' first advent, the disciples wondered about and expected this restoration of Israel.

Michael stands for Israel during the End Times in a great time of trouble. If we can equate a time and action with Jesus' second advent, then Michael must be Jesus. We can do that from Matthew 24:21,22,29-35 and Luke 21:25-33. The "son of man" (who everyone would identify as Jesus) returns during a great time of trouble. In that context, Jesus added the sign of a budding fig tree.

Scripturally, the fig tree symbolically represents Israel. This tree coming to life represents her rebirth as a nation in 1948. So, in the prophecies of the second advent we have the two main features associated with Michael in Daniel 12. We understand it to be Jesus doing the work in both cases.

Acts 1:6,7: (KJV) ⁶*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ⁷And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.*



Thus, the disciples clearly understood that the Messiah (Jesus) would be the one who would re-establish the kingdom of Israel. Therefore, [Daniel 12:1](#) and [Acts 1:6](#) refer to the same events, and Michael/Jesus is the one restoring Israel.

4. [Jude 1:9](#): (KJV) *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*

We are told Michael is an archangel, suggesting there are none above him except God. This shows the power of Michael is greater than that of the devil, as it would seem the devil backed down from his intentions at the word of Michael.

5. [Revelation 12:7](#): (KJV) *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.*

Michael wages war against the dragon who had been bitterly persecuting the early church. This war saw the end of the 10 years of persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor, Diocletian.

When reviewing all of the above scriptures and the meaning of the name “Michael,” it seems reasonable that Michael describes Jesus’ special role of dealing with and assisting God’s people, whether they be part of the nation of Israel or Christians during this age.

[1 Thessalonians 4:16](#): (NIV) *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

Here Michael is not mentioned by name. Again, archangel means “chief messenger.” Jesus is Jehovah’s chief messenger, described as the Messenger of the Covenant, in [Malachi 3:1](#). The context is about the resurrection of the saints and the time of Christ’s return, using symbolic language. These words are meant to bring comfort to the saints. Here again Michael is fulfilling the specific role of working on behalf of God’s people - the application is consistent. Christ asserts his authority as the representative from God. He takes control and begins his reign in the kingdom in the midst of a great time of trouble.

Logos - Word - mouthpiece:

Michael appears at major times doing important work. This fits the role of being God’s mouthpiece.

It is interesting that only two angels are named in scripture, Michael and Gabriel. Curiously, the only times we see Gabriel was when there was an announcement relative to Jesus. He gave Daniel the prophecy of the 70 weeks, which prophesied the death of Jesus. In the Gospels, Gabriel spoke to Zacharias about the birth of Jesus ([Luke 1:19](#)) and told Mary she would give birth to Jesus ([Luke 1:26-31](#)). It appears that it would have been inappropriate for Michael/Jesus to announce the prophecies relative to himself or announce his own birth.

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1259: Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1259-rapture-anxiety/>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What is the classic rapture teaching made popular by books and movies? What is “rapture anxiety”? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Matthew 24:36-41)
2. Why was the Apostle Paul writing this letter to the church at Thessalonica? What two things might Paul have wanted to accomplish with this letter? (See 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, 4:15-18)
3. State the second main variation on the rapture viewpoint. What are two of the interpretations of the millennial kingdom? Explain the beliefs of those who believe in a “social gospel.” (See Revelation 20:1-8)
4. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to what three improvements in their spiritual lives? What were the early Christians’ expectations about Christ’s return? What did they fear? Why was this fear unfounded? How does Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians significantly differ from rapture teachings? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:1,6,11-12)
5. Do the events in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 happen simultaneously? At this point, where were Jesus’ faithful followers who died? What had to happen before they could go to heaven? (See 1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
6. When something is “coming,” how is that different from something being “present?” How does “in his day” help to define what is meant by *parousia*? In what way does Jesus talk about his return? Describe how a sunrise is like Jesus’ second presence. (See Matthew 24:27, Luke 17:24)
7. How was the first phase of Jesus’ return, his *parousia*, like the beginning of a sunrise? What was the purpose of it starting this way? How does the second phase, the *epiphaneia*, differ from the beginning? (See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, Acts 1:11, 1 Timothy 6:13-14)
8. If Jesus’ return is a process, how does this disprove the rapture? What is the final phase of Jesus’ *parousia*, the *apocalypses*, like? At this point, who will realize Jesus has returned? (See Luke 17:26-30, Revelation 1:7)
9. What are the events in 1 Thessalonians 4:16? How can Jesus return “like a thief in the night” and yet, “with a shout”? Who responds to his shout? Do they all respond at once? Give the order. Why does Jesus speak with “the voice of the archangel”? What happened when Michael, the archangel, arose in the late 1800s? (See John 5:26-29, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Daniel 12:1,2, Ezekiel 37)
10. How do the rapture teachings and the scriptural interpretation of the process of Jesus’ return compare? Which shows God’s plan and His compassion to the fullest measure?