

have been assumed that Paul must die before the Rapture, but not so, the Rapture could take place at any moment and he would be changed. Incidentally, the pronoun is emphatic in the Greek.

4. Its EXPECTATION v. 54-56

- a. For death. When the rapture takes place, a glorious fulfillment of Scripture takes place. Quoting from the O.T. (Isa. 25:8), the apostle shows that the Rapture completely overpowers death! The verb "swallow" has a perfective use of the prefixed preposition with the resultant meaning of "swallow up." What happens is that victory is established. The use of the Greek preposition "in" really means "unto." The word "victory" denotes the perfection of an imperishable life. There is no decay, but eternal duration. Who can truthfully fathom the depth of God's mercy extended here! What has come between loved ones since the days of Adam will be triumphed over. Glory! Death is seen by Paul as a venomous creature inflicting fatal wounds, but now overcome. The grave associated with death, is dealt a final and absolute subjection. The questions raised here from the O.T. (Hosea 13:14) hinged upon Israel's repentance then, but the Spirit appropriates them for His argument here and clothes them with a stimulating reality.
- b. For death. One of the moral bases for death is sin. This is clear from the Word (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12,21,22; 8:10). At the Rapture, the problem of sin will be forever settled in all of its ramifications for the child of God.
- c. For law. The terrible power behind sin is the law. Positive disobedience and revolt only come when there is law. Law stirs up everything in the human heart which opposes God. It is not an instrument for holiness! Both the law and sin suffered under the anvil of God's hammer thru Christ.

Conclusion. The saints, dead and living, will be changed. Ultimate victory for believers is assured. Are you one of them? Trust Christ and be certain you are!

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"The Last Trump"

1 Corinthians 15:50-56

Introduction

1. Resurrection is the future for all dead ones, but a resurrection unto life awaits those who know Christ as personal Saviour! Hallelujah for such a goal.

2. The body which is now possessed by the saints is of the earth. The resurrection "body" is peculiarly adapted to heaven. What a thrill it will be for all who have borne the image of the earthy to someday bear the image of the heavenly.

3. To effect the change from earthy to heavenly, a dramatic experience must take place. It is stated in direct terms (v. 50):

- a. Corporally. The verb "cannot" marks the utter incompatibility expressed here. Flesh and blood speak of the essence of life in its present arrangements. Such a body would be like a curtain to veil God's face; too weak to bear His glory; too ineffective an agent to execute His praise. Another kind is needed.
- b. Morally. Unless there is a total moral change effected by God, the kingdom of God is totally out of reach. This latently implies the new birth by the power of the Spirit. The total being must be changed and God will see to this. "Inherit" is used only to point to the secure idea associated with this whole matter.

4. It is first the natural and then the spiritual (v. 46). The present arrangement must change to bring about the occupation of Glory. The question is thus raised: how and what will do all of this? Here are the details God provides:

1. Its EXPLANATION v. 51.

- a. A mystery. This term is frequently used in

the Bible, but always refers to a work or purpose of God not hitherto revealed. There is no sense of secrecy whatsoever. A number of mysteries are noted in the Bible (Matt. 13:11; Rom. 11:25,26; 16:25; Eph. 3:3; 5:32; Col. 1:26; 27; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:16). Those initiated into the family of God through the blood of Christ are let in on these mysteries.

b. A reality. Not all will die. All will be changed. In another epistle (1 Thess. 4), Paul shows that those deceased at the time of the Rapture have the same benefits as those alive. Here he shows that those alive have the same benefits as those deceased! The change required by the dead will be extended to the living. The "we" shows the unity of the church and the body of Christ. No partial rapture! The use of "we" also suggests that Paul expected that his generation might be among the living described! This is a strong argument for the any-moment rapture of the saints and points to a pre-tribulation exodus of the church of Jesus Christ.

2. Its EXPEDITION v. 52.

a. Timing. The word used for "moment" is a hapaxlegomenon, hence only found here in the Bible. Transliterated into English, it is the word "atom." Until recent investigations, this was the item of indivisibility. Thus the instantaneousness of the Rapture is taught here. There is no painful process involved, but a quick event. There will be no time for a decision to receive Christ at that time.

b. Twinkling. This term is also a hapaxlegomenon. The root from which it comes means to throw. It is used of any rapid movement, such as a flap of a wing, the buzz of a gnat, the quivering of a harp, the twinkle of a star, the dart of a fish, the movement of an eyelid, or the rush of a storm. This and the previous term are used to show the short time in which God's program will be realized.

c. Sounding. The "last trump" shows the finality of the whole matter. The trump was used in the O.T. to call the people together, to strike their tents, or

to announce a feast (Num. 10:2-10). This is obviously the one to move! It is the same one as mentioned elsewhere by Paul (1 Thess. 4:16). It has no reference to other trumpets in relation to Israel (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 11). There is no ground whatsoever to assume that the church of Jesus Christ will be raptured in the middle of the tribulation. A clear understanding of the nature of the church will reveal the truth of the rapture of the saints prior to the Tribulation period announced by Daniel (9:24-27).

3. Its EXECUTION v. 52.

a. Trumpet sounded. In a Roman camp, a trumpet sounded three times: the first blast meant to strike tents and prepare to depart. Second blast meant to fall into line. Third blast meant to march away. Believers have heard the first one: to waken from sleep and be saved! The second relates to being in fellowship with the children of God associated in a local company of redeemed. The final blast is the rapture for which we now wait expectantly (Phil. 3:21). The final matter is an undated event, but it may well take place today.

b. Dead raised. This is a restatement in forthright terms of earlier words (v. 50) and what is to follow (v. 53). The idea of "incorruptible" is that the resurrection will be unto imperishableness. Death and decay characterize our present existence but then we shall realize what is prepared for eternity. This is explicated in the words "mortal and immortality" also. This "dying" must put on that which is "undying." The word for necessity here is one which expresses logical necessity. It just must take place since there is a resurrection. Paul uses the figure of putting on garments, so easily is the change accomplished by the power of a sovereign God.

c. Living changed. It is important to note that Paul ranks himself with these by the use of the pronoun "we." To have ranked himself with the dead would have fixed a date for the Rapture. It would