

They are referred to as those who do believe on Christ (1st class condition in Greek, v. 14). This is a peculiar reference to persons of this Age and is differentiated from all other believers.

It is SATISFYING.

a. For mental crises.

The complex world which has developed has always needed personal stability and care. God provides this in the Rapture. Think what He has given for the mind (2 Tim. 1:7) and for the heart (John 14: 1-3; 1 Thess. 4:18).

b. For moral crises.

No one who truly expects to be raptured will deal lightly with the life he lives. In view of what is coming, one's life is changed (1 John 3: 1-3; Col. 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:10).

c. For material crises.

Rising costs, difficult circumstances, etc. shake the beloved of the Lord, but God gives a sure promise (1 Cor. 15:58). The most rewarding work is that placed in the Lord!

4. It is STIMULATING.

Probably the most important passage on missionary philosophy is provided by Paul and based entirely on the expectation of the Rapture (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-21 with 5:1-13). This is the motivation which sparked the early church. They were revolutionaries in the spiritual sense. They knew the Rapture was the great divider of men. The world had to be reached!

Conclusion Some of the saints will die and be buried, but they will rise again. Some will live and never die. Believers of this Age of Grace will rise to meet the Lord in the air. We look not, therefore, for the undertaker, but the Uptaker, even our blessed Lord and Saviour. The nonbeliever can only expect judgment from God at Christ's coming to the earth (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). Amen.

"UNDERTAKER OR UPTAKER--WHICH?"

1 Thess. 4:13-18

Introduction

1. Exciting events are taking place in the world today. Never have we lived in such an era of inventions and technology. The developments of the hour are absolutely phenomenal. The advances of the next 3 decades will be beyond your present comprehension.

2. But not every thing should be expected from earth. Heaven will have its say also! God is working out His purpose for the ages and will surely see it through.

3. To get the picture clear and see the future through the Word of God, it is imperative to view these three items:

a. Scriptural groups.

The Bible names three major groups in the world: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God (1 Cor. 10: 32). Mark them:-

1) Jew. They are clearly defined (Isa. 41:8). The term "Jew" was first used in the time of Ahaz, but it refers to Israel (2 Kings 16:6). A Jew is what He is by birth (Mal. 2:10).

2) Gentile. A Gentile is one not classified as a Jew. He is born this way (Acts 17:28, 29). Often times referred to as "heathen," or "Greek".

3) Church of God. This is a reference to a Jew or Gentile who has believed on Christ and born into God's family by the Spirit (Gal. 3: 26). One retains his physical human birth relation, but has the addition of a spiritual birthright through Christ (Gal. 3:28). These people have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13). This event has significance since Pentecost only. There was no such baptism prior to that Day (Acts 2). The Church is totally distinct

from the Jews and Gentiles and the programs which God has outlined for these other groups.

b. Scriptural times.

1) Politically. Since the destruction of the temple and the captivity of Judah in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 17, 25), the "times of the Gentiles" have obtained (Luke 21:24). They will conclude when the final Gentile authority has been destroyed (Psa. 2; Dan. 11:45; Rev. 19:11-16).

2) Spiritually. These are currently the days when God is working toward the "fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25). He is waiting for the Gentiles to be saved, brought into the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23) and fullness accomplished (Acts 15:13-18).

c. Scriptural events.

1) Rapture. This word comes from a Greek verb meaning to "catch away" (1 Thess. 4:17). It signifies a sudden snatching away (cf. Acts 8:39; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; Jude 23; Rev. 12:5). It has reference to the time when Christ comes in the clouds to take away the "Church of God" to be with Himself.

2) Revelation. This word is from a Greek term meaning to "uncover, unveil, reveal." It is the root for the English term "apocalypse" meaning to remove completely a cover from something. It refers to the time when Christ comes openly to the earth with the armies of heaven to establish His kingdom on earth. There is utterly no connection between this coming and the one for the Church so as to warrant an identification of the two!

4. It is with the "Rapture" that this study is concerned. It is here that the believer of this present Age of Grace comes to grips with whether he will go to Glory from the grave or from a living situation. Give attention to the characteristics of the event:

1. It is SUDDEN. 1 Cor. 15:50-52.

a. Proportion v. 51.

As a "mystery" the Rapture is a truth made known to the initiated of the Lord, His truth not revealed before. Nothing mysterious, but doctrine His own come to know. The intent is the changing of the sleeping and living to Glory!

b. Perversion. v. 52.

The suddenness of His coming is not that it is unannounced, unanticipated, nor some sort of after-thought with God. It will occur and that in the timing of the Lord. But it is imminent. This does not mean immediately, but it does mean it could happen at any moment. May not be soon, but it is truly imminent!

c. Precision. v. 52.

The Greek term employed for "moment" here was taken as the item of indivisibility (atom). This now has been broken, but the truth remains. It will be done so quickly that no one will be able to take a second look. Reports have it that the time indicated is actually 11/100th of a second! No outward observation.

2. It is SELECTIVE. 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

a. As to Pattern.

There is a unique manner provided here for the Rapture of the saints of this Age of Grace. The plan of events is: 1) Descent of Christ from heaven. 2) Voice of the archangel. 3) Trump of God. 4) Resurrection of dead in Christ. 5) Living caught up in the clouds. 6) Union with Christ forever. There is no general resurrection here, but an out-resurrection from among the dead (Phil 3:10, 11).

b. As to people.

The consistent mention here of "brethren; ye, we," shows that a particular people are in view. Not all will be raised at this time, but a special group chosen of the Lord. They are true believers.

c. As to position.

They are believers who are "in Christ" (v. 16).