

tribulation and who is that will be Raptured when the Rapture takes place whether it will be all of the church or just part of the church. There are four major views in relation to the Rapture. There is the pre-tribulation, the mid-tribulation, the post-tribulation and the partial Rapture theory. What we would like to do next week, then, is to consider these four views and we shall spend our time considering it as a subject of controversy. Then, our last two lessons on this subject will be the signs of His coming. We would like to go through the scriptures and pinpoint many of the signs that indicate, I believe, that we are on the very threshold of the Rapture for the conclusions of the church age and we can well expect, I believe, the Rapture to take place very, very soon.

Message of Comfort

This morning, though, we are going to be studying it as a message of comfort. We will be reading from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In these verses, the apostle Paul in discussing the Rapture and this is the central passage on the subject, gives us three things. In verses 13 and 14, he gives us a bold declaration. Listen to it.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep that ye saw not even as others who have no hope, for if we believe, or because we do believe, that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, or who sleep through Jesus, as it literally is, those who sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him.”

That is his bold declaration. Now, in verses 15 through 17, you have a very explicit explanation of how this shall take place.

“For this we say unto you, by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming,” (there it is, “Parousia”) “of the Lord shall not precede” (the old King James uses an old English word, prevent, which means precede) “them who are asleep for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, we who are alive and remain shall be Raptured” (That is the way the Latin translation renders it—shall be Raptured, or shall be seized and carried off) “together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Verse 18 gives us His very direct exhortation,

“Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”

What we would like to do then in our exposition of this passage is look at the declaration, at the explanation, and the exhortation as they are given to us in these verses.

The Declaration

The declaration in verses 13 and 14 is based upon a very serious question that has come to the minds of the Thessalonians. It will be obvious to us that this question concerns them who are asleep. That is