

THE RAPTURE is not ABOUT our "church".

Why? Because 1Thess.4:13-18 was the hope before Acts 28, not after. 1Thess.4 was written while Israel stood as a nation. Israel was set aside at Acts 28 until a future resumption of God's purposes through her. The Jewish hope of 1Thess.4 was postponed with those purposes and is not the hope of today. A new hope was revealed to Paul alone after Acts 28. This hope is the Appearing or Revealing of Christ in the heavenly places, Eph.1:15-2:9.

When we hold something put aside and which is not current; not ours, we promote confusion and doubt. Not only so, the current rapture theories are a far cry from the actual events described in 1Thess.4. The rapture, as proclaimed today, is not 1Thess.4 of the Bible. Thessalonians describes the return of Christ to the earth; it does not describe the snatching away of Christians into heaven. Tradition is awry on two counts, it promotes a hope put aside and it can't get the facts straight on that previous hope; a double blow to sound doctrine.

It is such a pity that the "rapture" holds such sway in the Christian community which embraces it as the gateway to heaven. The rapture was pretty much unheard of prior to the C19th and was widely promoted early in the 20th. We are required to search and see and rather than accept something held by the majority as proven, we are obliged to rightly divide the Word of Truth and hold things in harmony with it. If this means rejecting a majority view, then so be it.

We begin with a brief presentation of 1Thess.4 as seen in the wider context; its relationship to the Old Testament pattern.

The traditional "rapture" of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the fulfillment of the "rapture" found in Israel's typical salvation. Israel's typical salvation must be understood as the pattern, the template from which 1Thess.4 has to be drawn. The "rapture" of the O.T. has nothing to do with our church. If the pattern says Israel and we make it our church, then we have mismatched the finished product with the pattern.

The Feasts of Lev.23 with the O.T. rapture of Ex.19 embedded in their redemptive steps, do not anticipate anyone going to heaven, they are about Israel's deliverance from Gentile dominion from one land to the Promised Land.

The hope of the O.T. rapture was about Israel and a faithful remnant and 1 Thess.4 is the hope of Israel and a faithful remnant. 1 Thess.4 is the true rapture of which the O.T. was the type. We are not "spiritual Israel", we are not the remnant of prophesy; the hope outlined in 1 Thess.4 is not ours, besides which it has been put aside.

Our inheritance is not in the air, or the clouds, nor are we gathered into it when the Lord descends out of heaven. We are not gathered into the very place from which the Lord had departed. The word MEET, and "bring with Him" negate the thought that anyone is going back into heaven in 1 Thess.4. In fact, would every honest student of the Word read the passage and find one hint that that is so. Nevertheless, our traditions have blinkered us so that we, en masse, read into the passage concepts foreign to it.

The Bridegroom does not come FOR the Bride in the East, He comes TO her, and thus Matthew chapters 24-26 speak of the Trumpet return of the Lord to the earth. Then those elect are gathered and He sits upon the throne of His glory and judges the nations, on the earth. Those who are His in that calling, are gathered into the Kingdom of heaven on the earth and some children of the Kingdom are thrown into outer darkness. Matt.24, 1Cor.15, Revelation and 1 Thess.4 are about the same "rapture"

event, the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets. Trumpets was also featured; typified in the O.T. It belonged to Israel in the past and belongs to Israel in Matt.24, 1Cor.15, Revelation and 1 Thess.4.

After Acts 28, Paul received the present dispensation in which we read that we, the church His Body (not Bride), have been raised and seated in the heavenly places and when He appears there (before He descends from it) we shall appear with Him, see Eph.2:4-9, Col.3:1-4.

The Gospels and the Acts were not understood by the Lord's servants as any new beginning. Unfortunately our traditions have obscured the fact that the Scriptures of that time clearly state it was the "ends of the ages" see Matt.16:28, 24:34,26:64, Roms.13:11-12, 1Cor.7:29-31, 10:11 and 1Thess.4:15, 17. The return of Christ to the earth and His reign out of Jerusalem was the expectation held. Not one writer spoke of any believer going to heaven; on the contrary they were all:

... waiting expectantly for His Son from (out of) the heavens,.... 1Th 1:9-10

Paul told the Corinthians they, including himself, would not all die (1Cor.15:51) and would be confirmed unto the "end" which was the "revelation" or "apocalypse" of the Lord;

Behold, (am) I tell(ing) you a mystery(?) We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1Co 15:51-52

even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that you come behind in no gift, waiting for the **revelation** of our Lord Jesus Christ. He shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Co 1:6-8

The book of Revelation is a book of the events relating to the culmination of Israel's history and events that fall into place after the Lord returns to the earth. Revelation includes things about the false prophet and the Antichrist and the sufferings of the over comers in those last days. Revelation is about the great and terrible Day of the Lord, an incredible event of prophecy.

Revelation reveals 7 trumpets. When the last trumpet sounds then the Lord descends to the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords;

And the seventh angel sounded (trumpeted). And there were great voices in Heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ. And He will reign forever and ever. Rev 11:15

This event in Revelation is not about our Lord reigning from the heavenly places over the earth. He descends to the earth at the last trumpet just as He descended to the earth with a trumpet in the Old Testament, Ex.19:16.

The book of the Revelation is about the earthly purposes of our God; Israel becoming that Kingdom of Priests they were always intended to be, see Ex.19:6, Is. 61:6, 66:21-22, Rom.12:1, 1Peter 2:5, 9, Rev.1:6, 5:10 and 20:6.

Much of Revelation was anticipated in Israel's deliverance from Gentile dominion in Egypt and their entrance into the Promised Land. Their journey from bondage to a land flowing with milk and honey is mapped out in their Feasts which are also very helpful in understanding Revelation and 1Thess.4. These Feasts are prophetic holydays and proclaim Israel's future; Israel's greater exodus. The Feasts are about God's program for the earth, they say nothing of His program for heavenly places and the Church which is His Body.

Passover, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost are the first group of Feasts and set the stage for the Kingdom of Heaven. They foreshadow the deliverance from Satan and his

bondage. Pentecost foreshadows the equipping of God's people Israel for service. Then the latter group of Feasts, in the autumn, typifies the great entering of this Kingdom under Messiah. The first of these Kingdom Feasts is Trumpets. If Trumpets in the O.T. were about Israel then they are about Israel in the N.T.

The Passover's blood stayed the hand of the destroyer and Israel, God's firstborn, was preserved while Egypt's firstborn perished. Typical Passover took place in Egypt.

Unleavened Bread speaks of sanctification, separation from the enemy to God for service. Israel consumed the Passover Lamb with unleavened bread. The separation was immediate and complete. Unleavened Bread took place in Egypt.

Pentecost is typified at Mt Sinai. Fifty days after leaving Egypt Israel arrived at the holy mountain where supernatural gifts were given to prepare that nation for service. The Old covenant was given here. Pentecost looks forward to the last group of Feasts which is Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles. These later feasts took place in the Promised Land.

At Trumpets Jericho fell and this foreshadows the Kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord as we have seen in Revelation.

Atonement, the great day thereof, was a day when Israel enjoyed typical national cleansing. One day a year the High Priest entered the holiest of all with the blood of cleansing. Christ is Israel's High Priest and when He returns to Israel He shall take away their sins under the terms of the New Covenant. This is when they will mourn for Him and look on the One they have pierced.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the harvest festival for Israel when they will flourish under their Messiah and His bountiful provision. The Kingdom originating from heaven on the earth and the Lord's Prayer realized; "thy will be done on earth".

The Feasts of Israel might teach some wonderful fundamental truths and most expositors take these fundamental elements but totally ignore the dispensational setting of them. They disregard the fact that the Feasts are about Israel and God's purposes for the earth. As soon as these teachers see the Passover blood in the Gospels and Trumpets in the Acts period epistles they think "Church" instead of Israel. Redemption by the blood is not unique to the Church His Body, how else was Israel delivered in the past and how else will they be delivered in the future?

During Acts the believers were expecting the Lord's return to the earth at Trumpets; the very reality that the O.T. Feast typified. At that Feast fulfillment, every Israeli eye will see the Lord at the right hand of God just prior to His descent to the earth and then they will then look closely upon the One they have pierced and mourn for Him. See Lev.23:26-30, Matt.24:29-30, 26:64 and Zech 12:10 and 13:6.

This Festive calendar of Israel is the setting of 1Cor.15 and 1Thess.4. Israel's history guides us in our understanding of New Testament end time events for Israel and those blessed with her.

Let us follow Israel's salvation in type. In Egypt, Passover and Unleavened Bread had been typically fulfilled and Israel was brought to Mt Sinai where the Feast of Pentecost was typically fulfilled.

In this stage of Israel's journey to the Kingdom on the earth, certain Israelites had received "gifts of The Spirit". These divinely given gifts enabled them to make the High Priest's garments (Ex.28:2-4), and construct the Tabernacle and its vessels of service (Ex.31:1-7). Israel was made ready to enter the Kingdom. My Sinai was only a short

march to the Promised Land. Those who experienced Pentecost of the O.T. could have lived and entered the Kingdom at Trumpets. From Pentecost to Trumpets was potentially only a short space of time.

We have already shown that the Acts period was not the beginning of anything but the “ends of the ages” when the return of the Lord was expected at that Feast of Trumpets fulfillment. This event could have happened in the lifetime of the believers if the nation of Israel had faith in their Messiah.

In Deuteronomy 1:1-2 it was 11 days from Mt Sinai to the border of the Promised Land. Eleven days is not a long journey and had Israel faith, they could have entered their inheritance then and there at Trumpets. In other words Trumpets could have followed Pentecost in a very short space of time. But Israel lacked faith and were turned and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. In the same way, Israel was given opportunity to repent and turn back to the Lord during Acts. The Lord would have returned at Trumpets 2000 years ago but Israel nationally lacked faith and has been “in the wilderness” for all this time.

At Mt Sinai we see a typical Pentecost which anticipates the last group of Feasts which start with Trumpets. The feast of Trumpets is anticipated during this time spent at the mountain and in Ex.19 we see 1Thess.4 foreshadowed.

Here are some wonderful features of the Lord’s descent “out of heaven” way back then which guide us in our understanding of this hope of the Acts period. Let us begin by reminding ourselves of the setting of the type and shadow;

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. And now if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel. Exo 19:4-6

To even imply this has anything to do with us as members of the Church which is His Body is going way beyond the bounds of Scripture. It is the nations and all the earth in Exodus. We have no right to change the setting of Ex.19 to “the Church” in the fulfillment passages of Matt., 1Thess.4 and the book of the Revelation. It was the earth and Israel in Ex.19 and it is Israel and the earth in these New Testament passages as well.

In Exodus 19 the Lord descends out of Heaven to the earth in clouds. He descended to the earth with a Trumpet blast and there were thunders and lightning and earthquakes. He was accompanied by angels (Ps.68:17) and Israel was gathered together in one place at the base of the mountain. The Lord spoke with a voice and Moses went up to meet the Lord. Does this sound familiar?

Here are the Exodus 19 verses which are practically point by point repeated in 1Thess.4 and other New Testament passages which deal with Israel’s future glory. Again my friends, if the setting in Exodus 19 is Israel’s typical deliverance then what right do we have to alter 1 Thess.4 as being the deliverance of the Church which is His Body? The setting of Exodus is a guide to 1 Thess.4.

The Lord’s coming out of Heaven in the Clouds.

And Jehovah said to Moses, Lo, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever. And Moses told the words of the people to Jehovah. Exo 19:9

For other references about clouds see, Ex.19:16 below, Deut.33:26, Dan.7:13, Matt.24:30, 26:64, 1 Thess.4:17 and Rev.1:7. In that day Israel will certainly believe in the Lord after centuries of rejecting Him.

The Lord descends to the earth and is seen by the nation of Israel. This is not some secretive, invisible or silent coming of the Lord in Ex.19 and neither is the fulfillment of this in 1Thess.4 and Revelation.

[And be ready for the third day. For the third day Jehovah will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. Exo 19:11](#)

Every eye will see Him as He descends (Zech.12:10, Matt.24:30, 26:64 and Rev.1:7). This must be understood according to Ex.19. Every eye of Israel will see him, and the universality assumed and explained by modern TV is ludicrous.

The Trumpet blast heralds his descent in Ex.19. Again, nothing silent about this trumpet call.

[There shall not be a hand to touch it, but that he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, it shall not live. When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mountain. Exo 19:13](#)

For other Scriptures describing the Trumpet blast as the Lord descends to the earth and Israel being gathered see, Ex.19:16, 19, 20:18, Joshua 6:5 (note The Commander of the Lord's hosts was in the Land, see Joshua 5:14). See also Psalm 47, Isaiah 27:13, Joel 2:15, 16, 18, Matt.24:31, 1Cor.15:52, 1Thess.4:16 and Rev.11:15 where sounded in the original is trumpeted.

Joel 2:30-31 speaks of future signs in Heaven and the earth beneath including dimness of light. We can't forget that Egypt experienced darkness in Israel's typical redemption. Here are some signs in heaven and earth in Ex.19.

[And it happened on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain. And the voice of the trumpet was exceedingly loud, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Exo 19:16](#)

For other Scriptures which speak of thunder and lightning associated with Israel's deliverance and the Lord's descent to the earth see Ex.9:23 and Rev.11:19.

The Lord came down to the mountain and a voice was heard and smoke was seen and the earth shook.

[And Mount Sinai was smoking, all of it, because Jehovah came down upon it in fire. And the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and became very strong, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. Exo 19:18-19](#)

Please note, the Lord came down to the earth in Exodus 19 and the Lord's return to the earth was the expectation of the Gospel and Acts period; the Scriptures overwhelmingly support this. The Lord returned to heaven after Exodus 19, but this will not be the case when the picture becomes a reality. See Matt.24 and 25 noting the judgment of servants and the nations on the earth. See also, Matt.24:7, 27:51, Hebrews 12:26-29, Rev.6:14-17 and 11:16-19.

The Lord came down to the earth and Moses goes up to meet Him. Moses represents that elect company who are privileged to "meet" the Lord in the future when He descends to the earth.

[And Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. Exo 19:20](#)

The people of Israel were gathered to meet the Lord (Ex.19:17). Remember that Israel will be re-gathered when the Lord returns, see Jer.31:10, Ez.11:17, 34:12-14 and Matt.3:12, 24:31, Lk.13:34, Jn.11:52, and 2Thess.2:1.

The people of Israel were gathered together when the Lord descended from heaven in Ex.19, but Moses was privileged to go up and meet the Lord as He descended. Again we note that in this historic anticipation of 1Thess.4, the Lord returned to heaven, but Moses did not go into heaven with Him since Moses and the people of Israel are the

vehicles for God's purposes on the earth. In the glorious future for Israel, the Lord will not return to heaven, He will descend to the Mount of Olives as the following verses declare; Joel 2:27, Zech.14:4, Matt.24:3, Acts 1:11 and Romans 11:26. The Lord descends out of heaven to the earth in 1Thess.4.

It is also noteworthy to remember that the Lord descended in Exodus to further equip His people with the Law. A covenant came into being, a conditional one. Israel agreed to obey the Lord but they did this in their own strength and soon failed. At the last Trumpet of the N.T., the Lord descends in like manner and plants the New Covenant in Israel's heart as Jeremiah prophesied, (Jer. 31:33). My prayer is that every Christian would read Jer.30-31 and leave that prophecy with Israel. Then we would discard the nonsense that we are New Covenant Christians today. For too long the Christian community has taken the things of Israel and forced them into this present dispensation of the grace of God.

When the Lord descended to Mt Sinai as described in Exodus 19, it anticipated, Trumpets, the beginning of Israel's typical Kingdom. In eleven days Israel could have entered into their inheritance. This beginning is a beautiful picture of Israel's future Kingdom of glory. Just as the Lord descending to them in Exodus 19, so in 1 Thessalonians 4 He descends to Israel at the beginning of their future Kingdom which could have taken place 2000 years ago. We have identical elements and characters in both Exodus 19 and 1Thess.4.

When Israel proved faithless at Kadesh-barnea there were two men who remained convinced that the Lord could do what He had promised; Joshua and Caleb (Num.14:30). These two were preserved to the Kingdom and entered at Trumpets. During the Acts period there was a remnant; believing Jews and later, Gentiles. The remnant of the Acts period, called the "Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16, also believed in the Lord while the nation proved faithless. These Acts period believers would have also been preserved to the Trumpet coming of the Lord had the nation repented. This is why Paul wrote during Acts, "we shall not all die" and "we who are alive and remain".

Though Israel was put aside at Acts 28, the faithful ones, the over comers will indeed go up to meet the Lord when He finally comes at the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets. For remnant verses see the following passages. Gen.45:7 where the rejected Joseph was recognized by his brethren the second time. Isaiah 1:9, 10:20-23, Roms.9:24-29, 11:5, Joel 2:32 and Acts 2:39.

Prior to the next chapter would the readers please read 1Thess.4:13-18. Try and find one word or phrase which says anyone, either the Lord or the faithful remnant of that time, were going back into heaven. If the Word of God says nothing about anyone going back into heaven, why is tradition held so powerfully in contradiction to it?

We shall examine the "rapture" passage of 1 Thessalonians 4 which was written in the "ends of the ages". We shall see in Thessalonians that the Lord was returning to the earth as opposed to the widely held view that he was only "descending out of Heaven" to the air and then snatching all believers back into heaven with Him.

To begin our examination of 1 Thess.4:13-18, we shall consider its context and the words and phrases used. I appreciate this will not be the traditional fare and at some point readers may feel they are being robbed of something wonderful. Let me assure everyone, the opposite is true. By pushing aside the curtains of tradition a window opens to a glorious new view which will more than compensate for any sense of loss.

Thus far in our examinations it has been proven that Scripture opposes the tradition that the Gospel and Acts were the beginning of the new “church” era. We have seen from Scripture that they were the ends of the ages. The return of Christ to the earth was expected in the life of the believers at that time and the Kingdom of Heaven did not mean the Kingdom in Heaven, but the rule of Heaven on the earth with Christ dwelling on the Holy Hill of Zion. Pentecost was not the “birthday” of anything. Peter and Paul’s messages during Acts spoke of this wonderful return of Christ to redeem Israel and restore the Kingdom.

The mainstream denominational systems claim 1Thess.4 is the “rapture” of “the Church”. That is, that Christ will come out of heaven, snatch resurrected and changed believers to the air, and then take them all back into heaven. This event is seen as being before the tribulation, half way through the tribulation or after the tribulation. But is any of this what Scripture teaches? Let us examine the passage very carefully verse by verse.

The opening verse sets the context which is the dead in Christ. Paul is writing to assure them regarding those believers who have died;

[But I would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others who have no hope. 1Th 4:13](#)

Understanding will grow if we start where Paul starts. Some of the Thessalonians had fallen asleep, they had died, and the living were grieving. Paul comforts them with this wonderful explanation of the hope before them at that time;

[For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. 1Th 4:14](#)

Please note the “even so” in this verse. Just as the Lord Jesus died and rose again, even so, in the same way, God will through the Lord Jesus, bring with Him those who are asleep in Christ. The Lord Jesus died and rose again; believers of that time died and will rise again at the last trumpet. This is the wonderful assurance Paul is giving here.

In considering 1Thess.4, we need to discard the false teaching that all dead believers of that time were already in heaven and “coming back with Him to the air”. Paul knows nothing of that concept here. Christ died and rose again, even so, in this same way; God will resurrect and bring with the Lord to the earth those who are asleep in Christ.

Reconsider Paul’s words carefully. Notice Paul does not say the souls of those who are dead will be brought back with the Lord and fused into their resurrection bodies. How can such a concept hold sway? Fanciful imaginings might be the kind way of naming such views. Read what Paul states again;

[For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. 1Th 4:14](#)

How will God bring through the Lord Jesus those who are asleep in Christ? The answer is simple, just as Christ died and rose again even so those asleep in Christ will rise again. This is how they will be brought with Him back to the earth. Let’s consider the next verse;

[For we say this to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not go before those who are asleep. 1Th 4:15](#)

When Paul wrote this letter he included himself in the “we” who would live and remain to the last trumpet. This affirms that 1Thess.4 was written in those Acts period “ends of the ages”. This is not the case today, that hope was postponed at Acts 28.

The words “go before” should stand out for those who think anyone who has died in Christ has “gone before”. No believer gets to be with the Lord before any other believer; this idea 1Thess.4 clearly denies. I think it is time we believed the Word of

God and re-examined the universal tradition of Scripture which alters the Word of God and blindly says, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord". Such a statement does not exist in Scripture.

Paul clearly says we, and that "we" of Scripture does not include you and me today, but it included the believers at that time. At that time Paul said he and those other believers still alive would not go before those who were asleep. Tradition fails to "test things differing" and places every believer today in the "we" of a previous administration.

Paul continues his exposition about those who are dead that is, asleep in Christ. He explains how God would bring the dead believers with Christ;
[For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. 1Th 4:16](#)

Notice, the dead will rise first when the Lord descends out of Heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. This passage is about those who are asleep in Christ, not about the Lord bringing Christians out of heaven. In 1 Cor.15:51-57 Paul tells us that "this mortal shall put on immortality" at the last trumpet. How is it that tradition tells us we are immortal if Paul says we are yet to put it on? In 1Tim.6:16 Paul clearly writes "Christ alone has immortality" and if only Christ has immortality then we dare not claim it for ourselves.

Paul's assurance for those Thessalonians who were grieving at the loss of loved ones was that the dead will be raised first at the coming of the Lord. He goes on to say;
[Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:17](#)

This is the "rapture" verse and as always, with traditions, the focus is on the phrase "caught up together" rather than the reason for them being "caught up together".

The dead believers of that company, who will be raised from the grave, and the living believers who will be changed (1Cor.15:51), will be caught up together TO MEET the Lord in the air. This is where tradition and the Word of God part ways. Tradition says that this body of resurrected and changed believers is snatched back into Heaven. The Word of God does not convey this for they are caught up together to meet Him as He descends out of Heaven. Look at what the Word says;
[For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... KJV, MKJV. 1Th 4:16](#)
[..... the Lord himself will come down from heaven... ISV 1Th 4:16](#)
[..... the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven.. LITV 1Th 4:16](#)

There is not one word or phrase in this passage which says that the Lord and this company are going back into heaven. Examine carefully please. We might think it says that because of what has been ingrained by tradition but we cannot inject into Scripture what we want it to say. The faithful believer stands on what God says, not what tradition thinks God says.

The hope of that time was that both living and dead believers would be caught up together to "meet" the Lord as He descended from, that is "out of" heaven.

The word "meet" (apantesis) only occurs four times in the New Testament. Since this is the word the Holy Ghost teaches, we should look carefully at it and understand fully what it means. It occurs twice in Matt.25 which of course is a Kingdom on the earth setting. Examine the first usage of the word "meet".

[Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Mat 25:1](#)

When is the THEN of this first verse? It is in the time when the Lord returns to the earth as He had been describing in the previous chapter.

And immediately after the tribulation of those days, ;..... And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. [Mat 24:29-31](#)

How wonderfully consistent is the Word of God! In Matthew we have the Lord descending to the earth after the tribulation, after the abomination of desolation (Mat.24:15) and the word “meet” is used.

In Thessalonians the Lord is descending to the earth and Paul warns them not to be deceived for the Day shall not come until after the abomination of desolation (2Thess.2:3-4). In the same context Paul also uses the word “meet”. Yet with such bold statements, masses of Christians still think the “rapture” can happen at any time.

In Matthew 24:29-31 we read of the Lord descending out of Heaven in the clouds and with the trumpet blast as in 1Thess.4. At that time, when He returns to the earth, THEN the wise virgins will go to MEET him.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes! Go out to meet him. [Mat 25:6](#)

These virgins are not going away with the bridegroom. In eastern marriage the bridegroom comes to the bride’s home. He comes TO her, not FOR her. Once the Bridegroom arrives THEN the marriage supper is enjoyed. There is no celebration for any calling before He comes. The wise virgins represented those who “watched” (Matt.25:13) and were thus rewarded with a meeting with the Bridegroom as He came TO the marriage.

This “meeting” has nothing to do with the Lord “appearing” in the heavenly places. This is the Lord coming back to the earth. We know this from the very context of these first occurrences of this word “meet”;

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory. And all nations shall be gathered before Him. And He shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. [Mat 25:31-32](#)

The throne of His Glory is on the earth, the nations are on the earth, see Joel 3. The Lord will come and all His Holy angels with Him. These are the “saints” or “holy ones” of Jude 14 and in this verse:

[in order to establish your* hearts \[fig., inner selves\] \[as being\] blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the Arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His holy ones \[or, saints/angels\]. ALT 1Th 3:13](#)

Holy Ones does not always mean human believers, it can also mean angels. This verse cannot be used to teach that all believers who have died are coming back out of heaven with the Lord.

The next occurrence of this word “meet” is in Acts;

[And the brothers from there hearing of us, they came to meet us as far as the market-place of Appius, and Three Taverns. Seeing them, thanking God, Paul took courage. Act 28:15](#)

The brothers from Rome came to “meet” Paul. The brothers from Rome did not jump in a ship and turn around and go back to Jerusalem with Paul. Paul continued on to Rome. Those believers who are “caught up together” go to a meeting in the clouds in the air, and then they return to the earth with the Lord.

In every case this word “meet” does not mean continuing on into the place from whence the one being met came. On the contrary, it means to go out and meet the one coming to the place from which those meeting came. In other words, 1Thess.4 is

about that company of that time going up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air as He descends to the earth out of heaven. Those going to meet Him do not continue into heaven.

Also note that those caught up to meet the Lord were only caught up to the air. The air being the place of the clouds:

[Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:17](#)

We, the Church which is His Body, do not have any inheritance in the air or the clouds. Air, voice, angels and clouds are words associated with Israel.

The meeting was in the air and clouds as was anticipated in Ex.19.

The word air is not used for "heaven", Acts 22:23, 1Cor.9:26, 14:9, Eph.2:2, Rev.9:2 and 16:17. We will not be with the Lord forever in the air. These believers of the Acts period were expecting to go to a meeting in the air as the Lord descended to the earth where the Kingdom of Heaven would be enjoyed and they would judge the world and angels 1Cor.6:2-3.

The church of 1Thess.4 that goes to meet the Lord in the air is not our company, nor is the meeting in the air our hope today. The hope of Thessalonians was postponed at Acts 28 after which our hope was revealed to Paul. Our hope is not 1 Thess.4.

It is time for tradition which puts "going back into heaven" in this passage to be exposed for what it is; a falsehood and a deception. I repeat, not one word or phrase in 1Thess.4:13-18 can be found to remotely suggest that anyone, either the Lord or the believers who meet Him, are going back into Heaven.

We are not robbed of hope when we put aside the error of tradition.

We want the hope given us by the Lord through our Apostle Paul after Israel were put aside at Acts 28. The hope before us today is Ephesians 2:4-7 which is realized when Col.3:1-4 takes place. Col.3:1-4 takes place before 1 Thess.4, as we have explained and charted on this website.

We are looking for the "appearing" of the Lord. The appearing takes place in heavenly places where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. This is certainly not in the air. The appearing takes place before the trumpet and before the Lord descends out of Heaven to the earth.

We must "distinguish things that differ" and "rightly divide" the Word of Truth, Phils.1:9-10 MKJV and 2Tim.2:15.

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