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**Rapture - Is Paul speaking about a physical rapture or a spiritual gathering into Christ? (1 Thessalonians 4:17)**



Is Paul speaking about a physical rapture or a spiritual gathering into Christ?

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

By Dan Maines

**Is Paul speaking about a physical rapture or a spiritual gathering into Christ? (1 Thessalonians 4:17)**

From the fulfilled perspective, Paul is not describing a physical rapture where believers vanish into the sky, but a spiritual gathering into Christ at His coming in judgment in AD 70.

The language he uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 mirrors Old Testament imagery where God "comes with the clouds" (Isaiah 19:1, Daniel 7:13) in judgment, not to transport people

physically but to establish His reign and vindicate His people.

The phrase "meet the Lord in the air" reflects the ancient custom of citizens going out to greet a visiting king and escorting him back into the city (Acts 28:15), which in this case symbolizes the saints being united with Christ in His kingdom presence. This was a covenantal gathering, the living believers being joined with the resurrected saints in the completed body of Christ, marking the full arrival of the New Covenant order after the Old Covenant "heaven and earth" passed away.

In short, Paul is speaking of a spiritual gathering into the presence of Christ, not a future mass disappearance from the earth.

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