

1Thess. 4:13-5:10: The Rapture before Christ's Second Coming.

This passage describes the rapture and hint on the timing that it is certainly pre-tribulation.

Summaries of relevant background of the passage:

1Thess. 4:13-5:10: In 1Thess. 4, Paul is instructing the believers on how they ought to walk and please God (**4:1**), namely to abstain from sexual immorality (**4:3-8**) and to excel in brotherly love (**4:9-12**). As they walk with God, they are also waiting for Christ's return. The present issue is over some believers dying, while waiting for His return. It is causing them grief.

Explaining the passage:

1. Explaining how those who died will still participate in Christ's return. 13-18: There is a question regarding His return in **4:13**. Paul has already taught them that Christ will return as evident in **5:1-2**. However, for believers who die before His return, depicted by the euphemism asleep, will they lose out in this great event? It is such a concern that they are even grieving over it. Paul's answer is in **4:14** that as sure as Christ is resurrected, He will bring all **NT gentile** believers, (like the recipients of the Epistle of 1st Thessalonians), with Him on His return. "Bring" in Greek is "ago" - it means to bring them as a group. This is what the Thessalonians are uninformed in **4:13** and so Paul now explains to them this vital truth. But how can Christ bring all of them with Him on His return? The solution is in **4:15-18**, for there will be an event when dead believers will be resurrected to meet Christ in mid-air, together with the living believers, who will be caught up in the air after them (**16-17**). It is a different event from Christ's return, when His feet will stand on the earth (**Zech. 14:4**) and not in mid-air. This new event has a label - rapture. Still, it is postulated that we could meet Him in mid-air and then descend to earth with Him on that same day of His return. It is not possible because of **5:1-3**, in which the rapture is linked with the Day of the Lord. Moreover it will come like a thief in the night (see **Matt. 24:42-43**). In contrast, Christ's return is predicted to come just after the Great Tribulation (**Matt. 24: 21; 29-30**) and its timing can be predicted. The Day of the Lord begins with the rapture and ends with the end of Millennium; so the beginning is unpredictable. Consequently, this new revelation by Paul on the rapture solidifies the message of **5:1-2**. The rapture can happen anytime and hence the Day of the Lord will come definitely like a thief at night, unannounced.

The fact that the living believers will have bodily change with the believers who have been dead is supported by **1 Cor 15:51-52**. In **1 Cor 15**, Paul contended that resurrection is real, and affirmed Corinthians that all believers will be resurrected, refuting the heresy in the Corinthian church at that time (cf. **1 Cor 15:12**). In **1 Cor 15:50-58**, he concluded his discussion by revealing what will happen at the moment of resurrection. At that moment, there will be a trumpet sounded (**1 Cor 15:52**). Paul said that **not all the believers will die, but all will have bodily change (1 Cor 15:51)**, which matches what he said in **1 Th 4:13-18**. As the resurrection of the dead and the bodily change of living believers will surely happen at the same time, so will the rapture.

2. A charge to be ready for the Day of the Lord. 5:1-10

In **1:9-10**, Paul refers to them as a model church that turns from idols to wait for Christ's return. This is a gentile church as Jews will not be worshiping idols. He ends the letter with instructions on how to wait as God's holy community.

5:1-10 seems to be a continuation of the section in **4:13-18** but there are some distinct differences. In the previous section, Paul is answering a question over believers who died but the instructions here are for those alive and are waiting for Christ's coming. This is the focus of the chapter as it also ends with a benediction on His return (**23**). Paul starts with the issue on the timing of His return (1-3). Unlike the previous section, no special revelation such as on the rapture is needed for Paul had already instructed them on the subject. "The day of the Lord" refers to the period when the Lord will directly intervene and consummate His redemption. It comes like a thief meaning that it will be sudden and unpredictable. The period includes Christ's return but other passages show that within it is also the tribulation (**Joel 2:8-3:6; 2 Thess. 2:2**) and it would terminate at the end of the present world (**2 Peter 3:10**). In this section, it is discussed after the rapture in 4:16-18, suggesting that this is when it begins. This harmonizes well, for many details on "the day of Lord" are in the Bible such as in Revelation, making them predictable once the period starts. **It is the beginning, just after the rapture that is unpredictable.** Thus, we must always be alert (4-8). The key is to fully control ourselves and in v8 to have faith, love and hope, the three great Christian virtues. It simply means to actively walk with Christ, for we are destined to live with Him, whether alive or dead, either here or in eternity (9-10).

Revelation 14: The outcome of the tribulation's human participants. KV 13

The interlude on the background of the participants ends with a positive note on the final victory of the saints and the eternal punishment of the followers of the antichrist.

1. The Jewish tribulation saints in Heaven. 1-5

John begins with a vision of the 144,000 which must be the Jews in 7:3-8 who are sealed on the forehead and now it is revealed that this consists of the name of Christ the Lamb and the Father (**1-3**). They are seen on Mount Zion which could either be Jerusalem on earth or a reference to heaven, as in **Hebrews 12:22**. Since they are singing a new song before God's throne, with the four living creatures and the elders, they must be in heaven (3). But how did they get to heaven? Note that they should be protected from death by their sealing and the two witnesses. If the two witnesses can ascend into heaven, surely it is possible that at an appointed time, the 144,000 could also be "caught up", a Rapture II like that of the Church. Furthermore they are called first fruits in v4. If there is a Rapture II, this will make sense because they will be the first group of Jewish saints under the OT Covenant to have their resurrected bodies. Other OT saints will only be resurrected at the start of the millennial kingdom (**Ezekiel 37:12-14**). It also explains why Satan cannot eliminate the woman (or Israel) in **12:15-16**. God raptures the 144,000 so that the river from the serpent's mouth, which represents the antichrist's army, cannot destroy them. The 144,000 are described in **v4-5** but the characteristics in v4 seem spiritualized rather than a literal rendering. Following Christ wherever He goes is not literal but to emphasize their obedience and being first fruits just signify being an initial portion of a larger group. So "virgins" is probably referring to sexual purity for surely not all sexual relationships with women are defilement and also the 144,000 must definitely include faithful females.

2. Final call for repentance with warning of severe judgments. 6-13

The saints celebrate in heaven but judgments await the unbelievers. God in His grace will in **v6-7** offer the gospel to everyone alive in the world right up to the end. The gospel in the mid-heaven matches well with this being preached by Wi-Fi worldwide. But note the warning of judgment by the angel flying in mid-heaven. This probably means that the gospel and the warning will definitely be heard and is available to all, but for the unrepentant, judgments are then pronounced (**8-11**). Babylon's fall is in chapter 18 but as the torment is eternal, it will continue into hell. The section ends contrasting these woes with the blessedness of the gentile saints (**12-13**). They all have already died (7:9-17) and thus they will have rest "from now on", followed by rewards in heaven for their deeds.

3. Visions of the final harvests. 14-20

Different Greek words are used in the two harvests. The first in **v14-16** is "therimos" or the harvest of ripe crops and is often used for the ingathering of saints (Lu. 10:2, Jn. 4:35-38). As it is done by the Son of Man or Christ on a cloud, it fits well with a Rapture II of the Jews as the Church's rapture is also meeting Him in the clouds (1Thess. 4: 17). The second is "trugao" or reaping of grapes and clearly it's a judgment of God's wrath (**17-20**). The detail of blood filling 200 miles suggests that it's Armageddon for this is the length of the Jordon Valley outside Jerusalem the city. More will be given in 16:16-21.

Lesson to Ponder: God looks over His own in the tribulation, rapturing the Jews to avoid the worst and the saints in enduring death (12-13). Surely He will also look after us now.

The reasons for Rapture II when Christ saved the 144,000 at Bozrah

Definition: Rapture II is rapture of the 144,000 at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns.

1. In **Rev. 14:1-5**, the 144,000 is standing before the throne in heaven in the heavenly Zion. How did they get there? Surely, the best explanation is that they are raptured as in Rapture I and thus they are rejoicing on their victory by singing a new song.
2. This also harmonizes with **Rev. 14:14-16**, that Christ is sitting in the cloud and harvest with a sickle. He brings up the harvest to meet Him in the cloud as in Rapture I.
3. In **Rev. 15:4-5** is the celebration for the completion of the tribulation. Standing there are all those who have victory over the beast. They sing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb **(3)**. Those singing the Song of Moses must be Jews and must be the 144,000 who is victorious to the end over the beast and is there by Rapture II.
4. If the 144,000 Jews are slaughtered during the tribulation, then they will cry out like the saints in the fifth seal **(Rev 6:9-11)**.
5. **Rev. 12:15**, the vision is that the Serpent (Satan) tries to kill them by pouring water from his mouth. But in **Rev. 12:16**, the earth drinks up the water meaning they are saved. How can then they be slaughtered by the antichrist? The only way to avoid this is Rapture II.
6. Physical death and slaughter are always view in the OT as a tragedy. So, the slaughter of the innocence in **Jer. 31:15-16** and **Gen. 37:35** on the presume death of Joseph. Then also the slaughter of Armageddon is depicted as a horror **(Rev. 19:18)**. Also, in **Isa. 34:5-8** depicts Bozrah as a day of His vengeance and slaughter. How can God allow this also to be a day when all the 144,000 are slaughtered and their blood mixed with in the 200 miles dirge?
7. Then when He comes in **Isa. 63:1-6** to save His people, it is just their spirit if they are all slaughtered by the army of the beast. Rapture II is definitely a better explanation.
8. In **Micah 2: 12-13** is a prophecy that the Lord (the breaker) who will save and lead them out of Bozrah. There is no hint of any slaughter and the only way they can then appear next in the heavenly Zion in **Rev. 14:1-5** is Rapture II.
9. In **Mic. 5:8-9** and **Mi. 7:15-17**, are promises of final miraculous victories of the remnant over their adversaries, that all the nations will be impressed. It seems so contradictory to then end with a great slaughter by the antichrist at Bozrah.
10. It is God's way as in the Exodus that when the world is judged, His people is specially protected (So **Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 9:26** and Passover **12:13**). So, for the Tribulation, they are sealed and protected from natural forces. It does not seem logical that they are then allowed to be finally slaughtered and their blood mixed with the pagans.

11. For all the 144,000 to be present at Bozrah when Christ comes, they must have all already survived the bowls but without the two witnesses who are killed by the antichrist. No surprise for they are sealed and protected from natural forces. Indeed they are still susceptible to be slaughtered and that is why Christ comes to the rescue. Cannot imagine that *they survive the bowls and then God let them be slaughtered in the end.*
12. The 144,000 are called first fruits in **Revelation 14:4**. It means that they are the first harvest in a spiritual group. Note that they are resurrected at the end of the tribulation as evident in **Rev. 14:3** for they are before God's throne. Thus, they are first fruits in the sense that they are the first OT saints to be resurrected, for the rest will occur after Christ's return in **Eze. 37:12-13**.
13. The Jewish Remnant are promised great victories in Micah 5. They will be like a lion and also no one can rescue or match them (**Mi. 5:7-8**). Then in **Micah 7:13-16**, God will show them miracles like the Exodus and all nations will be ashamed. Furthermore, in **Jer. 23:7-8**, it will even be greater than the Exodus. It is difficult to see how these prophecies are affirmed if they are all killed by the antichrist. But rapture II will indeed uphold this.
14. In Rev. 11:1, there is a firm promise that God will preserving the holy of holies (naos) will the rest of the temple will be given to the nations rule by the antichrist. The worshippers in the temple are obviously the 144,000 or at least a good portion of them. Also, the two witnesses will be protecting them. Thus, the saving of the 144,000 by Rapture II is the best way to affirm that fulfilling of these promises. Furthermore, if the two witnesses are also caught up finally, it does not make sense if then very soon, the antichrist successfully slaughter the 144,000.

帖撒羅尼迦前書 4:13-5:10: 主再來前的被提

這段經文描述了被提的情況，並暗示了它會發生在大災難之前。

經文相關背景的總結：

帖前 4:13-5:10: 在帖前第四章，保羅教導信徒如何生活去討神喜悅（**4:1**），就是要遠避淫行（**4:3-8**）以及在弟兄相愛一事上更加勉勵（**4:9-12**）。他們在地上與神同行的同時，也在等候主再來。他們面對的難題是在等候主再來時，有些信徒死了，令他們憂心。

經文解釋：

1. 解釋已死的信徒如何能在主再來時有份（13-18 節）：**4:13** 提出了一個關於主再來的問題。保羅已教導帖撒羅尼迦的信徒主會再來（**5:2** 有提及）。可是，在主再來之前已死了的信徒（聖經用「睡了」來形容這些信徒的狀況），他們會否被摒除在主再來這大事以外？保羅在 **4:14** 的答案是，正如基督已經復活，神必會帶這些死了的信徒與基督一同回來。「帶來」在希臘文是 “ago” – 它的意思是以一個群體的方式帶來。這是 **4:13** 所說，帖撒羅尼迦信徒所不知道的，而保羅現在向他們解釋清楚這重要的真理。但基督如何能在祂回來時把他們全部帶來呢？答案在 **4:15-18**，死了的信徒會復活，和活著的信徒一起在空中與主相遇，而活著的信徒會接著在死了的信徒之後被提到空中（**16-17 節**）。這是與主再回到地上是不同的事件——主回到地上時，祂的腳會站在地上（**亞 14:4**）而非在空中。這嶄新的事件有一個名稱：被提。有人認為我們會與主在空中相遇，而與祂一同在同一天回到地上。**5:1-3** 顯示這並不可能，因為被提是與主的日子（Day of the Lord）相提並論的。再者，這日子會如夜間的賊一樣來到（參**太 24:42-43**）。相反，主再來是在大災難之後發生的事（**太 24:21; 29-30**），它的時間是可以準確預測的。主的日子開始於被提，在千禧年時結束時終結，所以它開始的時間是不能預測的。保羅提出這新的啟示令 **5:1-2** 的訊息更穩妥：被提可以在任何時候發生，所以主的日子必會如賊一般的來到，之前沒有任何警示。

林前 15:51-52 也支持活著的信徒與死了的信徒會一同有身體的轉變。在**林前 15 章**，保羅堅持復活是真實的事，否定了教會中說沒有復活的假教導，並向哥林多信徒保證所有信徒都要復活。在**林前 15:50-58**，保羅以在復活時所發生的事作總結。在那時，會有號筒響起（**林前 15:52**）。保羅又說，不是所有信徒都會死，但是所有信徒都要改變，這與他在**帖前 4:13-18** 所說的吻合。既然死了信徒的復活，與活著信徒的身體轉變要同時發生，被提也是一樣。

2. 命令要為主的日子作好準備

在 **1:9-10**，保羅稱帖撒羅尼迦信徒為教會的榜樣，因為他們離棄偶像，歸向神。這顯然是一所外邦人的教會，因為當時的猶太人不會拜偶像。在完結這信時，他教導帖撒羅尼迦信徒，作為神聖潔的群體，他們該以如何等候主。

5:1-10 看來是 **4:13-18** 的延續，但當中有些顯著的分別。在前面的討論中，保羅是在回應關於已死信徒的問題，但這裡卻是對活著並等候主的信徒的教導。這是全章的焦點，並以祂的再來作為最後的祝福語（**23 節**）。保羅以祂再來的時間開始討論（**1-3 節**）。與之前的討論有別，帖撒羅尼迦信徒在這課題上，不再需要特別的啟示，因為保羅已教導過他們。「主的日子」是指主會直接干預並完成祂的救贖的時期，它會像賊一般來到，意即它的到來是突然和不可預測的。這段時期包括自然主再來，但其他經文顯示它也包括大災難在內（**珥 2:8-3:6**，**帖後 2:2**），並以這世界的完結作結（**彼後 3:10**）。本段經文是放在 **4:16-18** 的被提以後，意味著被提就是這段時間的開始。這與其他經文一致，因為「主的日子」的細節在不少的經文（如啟示錄）中被提及，令人能在主的日子開始後，預知這些細節會在何時發生。只是「主的日子」（被提之後）在何時開始是不能預測的。所以，我們要常常儆醒（**4-8 節**），重點是要好好控制自己，並要有三種基督徒的德行：信、望、愛（**8 節**）。這代表我們要積極地與基督同行，因為不論是生是死，或在現在、或在永恆，我們定必要與祂一同生活。

第十四章：在大災難中人的結局

鑰節：13 節

就前兩章的幕間我們看到有誰參與在大災難之中，在結束時我們看見聖徒最後的勝利，以及那些跟從敵基督的人要受的永刑。

1. 經過大災難的猶太聖徒在天上 - 1-5 節

約翰先是給出一幅十四萬四千人的景象，他們必定是 7:3-8 所提到額上有印記的猶太人，如今印記的內容揭曉了，原來那是羔羊和祂父親的名字（1-3 節）。他們站在錫安山上，那可以是地上的耶路撒冷或是天堂，就如希伯來書 12:22 所說的。但因為他們在神的寶座以及四活物和長老們面前唱新歌，所以他們一定是在天上了（3 節）。但他們是怎樣到達天上的呢？留意他們已經蓋有印記，又有兩位見證人作保護，不用死亡。如果那兩個見證人升到天上，有可能在特定的時間那十四萬四千人也會“被提”，像教會被提那樣會發生第二次的被提。此外他們在第 4 節被稱為初熟的果子，如果有第二次被提的話這稱號會比較好理解，因為他們是屬舊約之下第一批帶著軀體進入天堂的猶太聖徒，其他舊約聖徒則在千禧年國度開始前才會復活（以西結書 37:12-14）。這也解釋了為什麼撒旦不能在 12:15-16 中消滅那個女人（或以色列）。上帝提了這 144,000 人，以至蛇口中出來的河水，即敵基督的軍隊，無法毀滅他們。第 4-5 節提及那十四萬四千人，但第 4 節的特質應是按靈意而非實在。基督到那他們跟到那不應按字面來理解，那主要是強調他們的順服，而作為初熟的果子是表明他們是一大群人中的首批人而已。因此“處女”可能是指性的純潔，因為肯定不是所有與女性的性關係都被褻瀆，而且這 144,000 人肯定也包括信實的女性。

2. 最後悔改的呼召，警告必有厲害的審判 - 6-13 節

聖徒在天上慶祝，但不信所等待的卻是審判。恩惠的神會在 6-7 節將福音賜給世界上每個活著的人，直到最後。空中的福音與現今普世線上傳講的福音非常吻合。但請注意那空中飛來的天使所發出審判的警告。這可能意味著福音和警告肯定會被聽到，並且所有人都可以得到，至於那些不肯悔改的人，他們的審判會被宣告（8-11 節）。巴比倫在第 18 章會覆滅，但因為那是永遠的刑罰，所以在地獄裏仍會繼續。這段的結束是以這些災難和外邦聖徒所有的祝福作對比（12-13 節）。他們全已離世（7:9-17），但“從今以後”便可得著安息，而他們的工作也會收獲天上的獎賞。

3. 最後收割的景象 - 14-20 節

兩個收割所用的希臘文都不一樣。第一個 14-16 節的是“therimos” 或者是指收割熟了的莊稼，這字通常也和招聚聖徒有關（路加 10:2，約翰 4:35-38）。因為那是人子或是基督在一片雲上完成的工作，這樣就和猶太人的第二次被提相合乎，因為教會被提也是在空中與主相會的（帖前 4:17）。第二個是“trugao” 或者是葡萄的收穫，顯然這是指神烈怒的審判（17-20 節）。血流到二百哩（三百公里）那麼遠，意表著這就是哈米吉多頓大戰，耶路撒冷城外約旦谷的長度就是如此。在 16:16-21 我們會看見更多的詳情。

思想心得：神在大災難中實在看顧屬於祂的，將猶太人提到天上，讓他們逃過最壞的情況及死亡的威脅（12-13）。當然，他現在也會看顧我們。

基督在波斯拉拯救十四萬四千人時發生《被提二》的原因

定義：《被提二》是在大災難結束，基督再來時十四萬四千人的被提。

1. 在**啟示錄 14:1-5** 中，十四萬四千人站在天上錫安的寶座前。他們是怎麼到達那裡的？當然，最好的解釋是他們像《被提一》一樣被提，因此他們唱一首新歌來慶祝自己的勝利。
2. 這也與**啟示錄 14:14-16** 一致，即基督坐在雲中拿著鐮刀收割莊稼。他帶莊稼到雲中與他見面，就像在《被提一》一樣。
3. **啟示錄 15:4-5** 是慶祝大災難的結束。站在那裡的，都是那些戰勝了獸的人。他們唱摩西之歌和羔羊之歌(第 3 節)。那些唱摩西之歌的人必定是猶太人，也必定是那最終戰勝了獸的十四萬四千人，並在《被提二》到達那裡。
4. 如果那十四萬四千猶太人在大災難期間被屠殺，那麼他們會呼喊神伸冤，像第五印中的聖徒一樣（**啟 6:9-11**）。
5. **啟示錄 12:15**，那異像是蛇（撒旦）試圖從口中吐出水來殺死他們。但**啟示錄 12:16** 提到，大地吞了那水，意味著他們被拯救了。這樣他們怎麼會被敵基督屠殺呢？避免這種情況發生的唯一方法是《被提二》。
6. 在舊約中，肉體的死亡和屠殺總是被視為悲劇，就像**耶利米書 31:15-16** 提到無辜被屠殺的人，和**創世記 37:35** 假定約瑟已死這兩個例子一樣。這樣，哈米吉多頓的屠殺也被描述為一場恐怖的事件（**啟示錄 19:18**）。另外在**以賽亞書 34:5-8**，波斯拉被指為神報仇和屠殺的日子，上帝又怎會允許那十四萬四千人全部被屠殺，他們的鮮血混在 200 里的河谷裏呢？
7. 然後當神在**以賽亞書 63:1-6** 降臨拯救他的子民時，倘若他們都被獸的軍隊屠殺了，那只會是他們的靈體。《被提二》絕對是一個更好的解釋。
8. **彌迦書 2:12-13** 預言耶和華（開路的）將拯救並帶領他們離開波斯拉。過程沒有任何屠殺的跡象，而他們接下來出現在**啟示錄 14:1-5** 天上錫安的唯一方法就是《被提二》。
9. 在**彌迦書 5:8-9** 和 **7:15-17** 預言了餘民將會最終奇蹟地戰勝敵人，令萬國讚嘆。若敵基督在波斯拉向他們施行大屠殺，這結局似乎前後非常矛盾。
10. 當世界受審判時，神的處事方式會像出埃及記一樣，他的子民會受到特別保護（**出埃及記 8:22； 9:4； 9:26 和 12:13 逾越節**）。因此，在大災難期間，他們被印，免受自然力量的影響。若他們最終被屠殺，血與異教徒混在一起，似乎不合邏輯。

11. 所有當基督回來時在波斯拉的十四萬四千人，除被敵基督殺害的兩個見證人外，一定都經歷過碗而倖存。這毫不奇怪，因為他們都被封上印並免受自然力量的影響。事實上，他們仍未免於被殺害，這就是基督前來拯救的原因。無法想像**他們在碗中倖存下來後，上帝最終讓他們被屠殺。**
12. 在**啟示錄 14:4**，這十四萬四千人被稱為初熟的果子。這意味著他們是一個屬靈群體中的頭一次莊稼。請注意，他們在大災難結束時復活，正如**啟示錄 14:3** 所表明的那樣，因為他們站在神的寶座前。因此，他們是初熟的果子，因為他們是最早復活的舊約聖徒，其餘事情將在**以西結書 37:12-13** 提到的基督回來之後發生。
13. 彌迦書 5 章應許猶太餘民會取得偉大的勝利。他們將像一頭獅子，沒有人能拯救或與他們匹敵（**彌迦書 5:7-8**）。然後在**彌迦書 7:13-16**，上帝將向他們展示像出埃及那樣的奇蹟，萬國都將感到羞愧。此外，在**耶利米書 23:7-8**，它甚至會比出埃及更神奇偉大。如果他們都被敵基督殺死了，就很難看出這些預言如何應驗。但《被提二》確實會令這一點站立得住。
14. 在**啟示錄 11:1** 中，有一個堅定的應許，就是神將會保存至聖所 (naos)，聖殿的其餘部分將交給敵基督統治的列國。到聖殿禮拜的人顯然是這十四萬四千人，或者至少是其中的很大部分。此外，那兩個見證人將保護他們。因此，那十四萬四千人因《被提二》得拯救是確認這些應許得以實現的最佳方式。此外，如果這兩個見證人最終被提上天，接著敵基督能成功屠殺這十四萬四千人，那就講不通了。