

The Divine Academy; The Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 15

5. The Divine Academy: Heavenly Deposit, Apostolic Cache

a) The Heavenly Deposit

We know nothing of our Lord's life from age 12 until He began His public ministry at age 30, the age at which a priest may begin to function under the Mosaic Law. During the last three years of His life, our Lord sought to deposit His knowledge of the Eternal Logos into the souls of His disciples.

However, it was obvious that He could not teach the entire realm of New Testament doctrine in such a short time. He made the following statement to His disciples on the evening of His arrest:

John 16:12 - I have many more things to say to you but you cannot bear them now.

John 16:13 - But when He, the Holy Spirit of doctrine comes, He will guide you into all doctrine ...

This guidance would enable certain selected men to correctly transcribe the Eternal Logos into the Written Logos.

However, Christ had just fired Judas Iscariot as an apostle and his replacement was yet to be selected. The one chosen would be given face-to-face instruction by Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 9:1 - Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?

Paul was appointed the twelfth apostle and became the recipient of a Heavenly Deposit transferred to him personally in the office of the Chancellor of the Grace Academy. Paul attended seminary in the Third Heaven, the Throne Room of God. His instructor was Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:2 - I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up into the third heaven.

2 Corinthians 12:3 - And I know how such a man ...

2 Corinthians 12:4 - was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak.

2 Corinthians 12:7 - And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations [the bulk of New Testament theology] for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh ...

I made reference to this passage a few weeks ago and it caused some of you to wrinkle your brow at me. This is one of those cases where you must disregard the laws of nature and place your faith in the veracity of the Scripture. This passage actually tells us that Paul was raptured into heaven in order to attend seminary.

The word which is translated “*caught up*” is the aorist passive indicative of the verb: *harpazo* – “to snatch, seize, take away; to carry off in such a way that no resistance is offered.”

The Latin translation of the Bible uses the word *rapturo* in this verse and it has the very same definition as the Greek *harpazo*.

It is from the Latin that we get the English word “*rapture*,” defined by the **Oxford English Dictionary** as:

The act of seizing and carrying off. The act of conveying a person from one place to another, especially to heaven. Taken and carried up to or into heaven (either in a literal or mystical sense).

This word generally describes any event which results in a believer leaving the environs of Planet Earth and instantly entering into the heavenly community.

We find the word *harpazo* in one of the two classic passages which describe what we call the Rapture of the church.

The Rapture is discussed in detail in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We will note the latter first:

1 Thessalonians 4:13 - We do not want you to be uninformed, fellow believers, about those who are asleep [those who have already experienced physical death], that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope [loved ones of unbelievers who have died].

1 Thessalonians 4:14 - For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and we do, even so God will bring with Him [at the 2nd Advent] those who have fallen asleep in Jesus [physically dead believers in resurrection bodies].

1 Thessalonians 4:15 - For this we say to you by the word [*logos*] of the Lord, that [*hoti*: used in the recitation of another’s words; may be translated as “quote”] we who are alive and remain [those physically living at the rapture] until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who are asleep [all do not receive their resurrection bodies at once].

1 Thessalonians 4:16 - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout [Commander-in-Chief issues marching orders], with the voice of the archangel [most likely Gabriel], and with the trumpet of God [reveille for those asleep]; and the dead in Christ [Church-Age believers only] shall rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 - Then [after the dead are resurrected] we who are alive and remain behind on the earth [Church Age believers who are physically alive at the moment of the Rapture] shall be caught up [*harpazo*: raptured] together [the ultimate family reunion] to meet the Lord in the air [this is not the 2nd Advent. All circumstances are different [see Revelation 19:11-Revelation 19:16]] and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 - Therefore, always comfort one another with these words.

The Rapture occurs in two shifts but the time differential between them is infinitesimally small.

1 Corinthians 15:51 - Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [not all Church Age believers will experience physical death], but we shall all be changed [all will be transformed from a temporal to an eternal body],

1 Corinthians 15:52 - in a moment [*atomos*: indivisible segment of time], in the twinkling of an eye [*rhipe*: metaphor illustrating the rapidity of the moment], at the last trumpet [reveille for dead Church Age believers]; for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed [*allasso*: transformed].

1 Corinthians 15:53 - For this perishable [body of the dead believer] must put on the imperishable [resurrection body], and this mortal [body of the living believer] must put on immortality [resurrection body].

In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 we see the word *harpazo* used to describe the exit resurrection of the Church Age believer from the environs of Planet Earth.