

Dear Janet,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked if a Gentile would be able to reach salvation after the rapture.

The word “rapture” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Many Christians have the idea that rapture will occur when Christ returns. This thought comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, Luke 17:34-35 and the similar account in Matthew 24. “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” (Matthew 24:40-41) We believe that Jesus is using word pictures to convey his thought. The “field” represents the world, from which our Lord, at his return, gathers those who are earnestly seeking him. We do not believe that the “taking” is literal, in the sense that one would be changed from a natural being to a spiritual being. Instead, we believe that at Christ’s return, “the one who is taken” is led to the place where the food of truth is to be found. The apostles asked Jesus where this place was. Jesus again replied in symbolic language, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.” (Luke 17:37) We believe that Jesus was saying that faithful Christians would be gathered to a spiritual feast of scriptural truth when he returns. Some respond to the opportunity (those who are taken) and some do not (those left behind). “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20) In keeping with one of the signs of his return, Jesus said he would provide “meat in due season” (Matthew 24:45). We believe that such spiritual food is being provided for us today.

What, then, is the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4:17? “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” We believe that the Apostle Paul is telling us that faithful ones who have fallen asleep throughout the Gospel age would be raised first when Christ returned to secretly reign or exercise his authority on earth. Those living at the time of his return would not precede those who slept, but afterward would join them in the same place (1 Thessalonians 4:15). The word “together” in verse 17 means the same place or location (not the same time), just as it does a few verses later when Paul says, “we may live together with him” (1 Thessalonians 5:10). “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Thus those Christians who had been sleeping in death for centuries have already been raised instantaneously upon Christ’s return. But those of us, who die in the Lord now, since his return, join those already in heaven with our Lord.

Can a Gentile reach salvation after the rapture? Since we believe that there is no mention of “rapture” in the Bible (as we explained above), we will briefly address the topic of salvation for all. As you may perceive from our answer thus far, only a select few have been called to be partakers of the heavenly salvation. What about the rest of humanity, Muslims, Jews, Christians in name only, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, etc.? Are they not also saved by the blood of Jesus?

When Jesus died and was resurrected, he paid the ransom price so that all people would be freed from the Adamic curse of death. His incredible sacrifice redeemed everyone who ever lived in the past and everyone who was yet to live. Numerous scriptures bring out this fact. For example, 1 Timothy 2:3-6 says, “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time.” And again in 1 Timothy 4:10 we read, “that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.” These scriptures indicate that all men will be saved, but that there is a special class (a heavenly class) who are to be favored first. John 5:28-29 says, “a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, (we believe this implies the heavenly class will rise to eternal life) and those who have done evil will rise to judgment.” This scripture implies a separation of the two classes that are to be saved—one in heaven and one class on earth who will be judged at a time yet future. This class that is to be judged, we believe, will be resurrected on earth and will have ample time to learn of the Lord and of his righteousness. “For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus Christ) the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

Even though the letters in the New Testament speak to the saints (the “called-out” ones, those striving to be of the heavenly or church class), the scriptures, as you can see, do not minimize Jesus’ sacrifice for everyone else. Those who are called out to sacrifice are judged now as they strive to copy the character of their Master, Jesus. Those not called out are not judged now, but will be later in the “day of judgment” on earth when the heavenly class has been completed. The end result of that judgment will be the eradication of tears, pain, sorrow, crying and finally death itself. (See Revelation 21:1-4.) We look forward with great anticipation to that glorious day!

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to go to www.christianquestions.net and sign up for CQ Rewind! It is free, without obligation, and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio

