

Rapture Question #2: What Does the Term “In Christ” Mean?

Recommended: Rapture Question #1: Is the word “Rapture” found in the Bible.

One of the main arguments put forth to support a Post-Tribulation Rapture is **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** where it is asserted that since the dead are being raised this must be the Resurrection which happens at the 2nd Coming of Christ. However, they ignore one very important detail—not all of the dead will be raised at the Rapture. Paul makes a point of indicating that it is only the dead IN CHRIST who are being raised at this time.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” 1 Corinthians 15:18 also describes believers who have died as those which are *“fallen asleep in Christ.”*

Who are the Dead “in Christ”?

The term “In Christ” is used numerous times in the New Testament where it refers to believers who make up the Body of Christ, the “Church” the Ekklesia of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 describes what happens when a person becomes a believer— *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

Romans 12:5 declares *“So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”*

Another passage where this is shown is in **Romans 16:7** which

states, *"Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were **in Christ** before me."* Paul indicates here that Andronicus and Junia were "in Christ" before he was, meaning that they were believers before Paul became a believer.

Other references to check out are:

Romans 8:1; Romans 16:3, 9; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 2 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians 1:22; Galatians 3:28; Philippians 1:1; Philippians 4:21; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 5:14; Philemon 1:23 and Philippians 4:21.

When did the Church begin?

In **Matthew 17:18**, Jesus states *"Upon this rock (himself, the cornerstone) **I WILL build my Ekklesia** (Church)."* "I WILL build" is translated from the Greek word οἰκοδομήσ^ω which is in the **Future** Tense.

The most important part of the Greek verb is the ending of the verb which tells us more than one thing. What is important in this instance is the sigma σ. This is called a tense formative. The sigma is the tense formative that tells us the verb is in the future tense. At the time Jesus spoke these words, what he was speaking of was still something that would happen in the future. The Ekklesia could not have existed before this. Future means future.

In **1 Corinthians 12:13**, Paul describes the means by which we enter into the Body of Christ. ***"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."***

So, when did this happen? The matter of when the Church began rests squarely on when the first believers were baptized into the Body of Christ. The Church could not have existed until this began to occur.

In **Acts 1:5** just before ascending into Heaven, Jesus states *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."* So even at the time of the ascension, the Church had not yet begun.

Just as Jesus stated, a short time later in **Acts 2** a total of 120 people (including the 12 Apostles, Mary the Mother of Jesus, the brothers of Jesus and other un-named women) were in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost just as Jesus had promised.

When is the Church complete?

In **Romans 11:25** Paul tells the Roman believers, *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."* The church will continue until the final believer has become a part of the body of Christ. The Rapture of the Body of Christ will occur when the Body of Christ is complete. Then soon after that, the partial blindness of Israel will be removed.

The Old Testament saints are not included in the Rapture because they are not part of the Body of Christ, they are not "in Christ." They are resurrected at the 2nd Coming of Christ along with those who become believers AFTER the Rapture occurs (which are often called "tribulation saints") and before the 2nd Coming of Christ.

(For more information on the identity of the Church, please see "The Church in the Wilderness.")

Next: The Rapture Question #3: How is the Rapture a "Mystery?"