



Literal-Historical-Grammatical Hermeneutic: Thieme; 1 Thess. 4:13-18: Return, Resurrection, Rapture, Reunion, Reassurance; Pretribulationism

Robert B. Thieme, Jr. He was eminently prepared for a life of religious scholarship and teaching. From the University of Arizona he had received a bachelor's degree in classical Greek and history, and was honored with membership in the alpha chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. He received a master's degree in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, summa cum laude. During World War II he served with distinction as a staff officer where he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

On May 7, 1950, Thieme accepted the call to become pastor of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas. From 1950 to 1959 the congregation of his small downtown church met for weekly Bible classes and Sunday services in a Quonset hut at 502 Lamar Street. As people from all around the city came to hear his dynamic preaching of the Scriptures, the building soon became inadequate. So, after much prayer and deliberation, the Colonel chose to build his new church on a prairie far out Westheimer Road. The westward expansion of Houston eventually enveloped the church and the surrounding area became known as the Galleria.

In 1982 Berachah Tapes and Publications became R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, dedicated to disseminating Colonel Thieme's tapes and publications at no charge to believers in every corner of the world. Australia, Burma, Philippines, Korea, Argentina, Canada, England, Germany, Hungary, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia are but a few of the countries where believers are the beneficiaries of his ministry. His publications have been translated into Spanish, German, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Hungarian, Telegue, and several African dialects.

Colonel Thieme teaches from the original languages of Scripture in the light of the historical context in which the Bible was written. He has developed an innovative system of vocabulary, illustrations, and biblical categories designed to communicate the truths of God's Word. He inspired men with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, evangelist, or missionary to prepare for the ministry and to carry the guidon of doctrinal truths.

Darby, Scofield, Chafer, Walvoord, and Thieme are but a few of the theologians who exploited the rediscovery of the "literal-historical-grammatical" method of biblical interpretation. From this system these men were able to reach several critical conclusions which enabled them to discover the order and simplicity of divine revelation. Some of these are:

The Rapture. This event is defined as follows by:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Daniel: Chapters One through Six*. 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1996), 213:

The resurrection and removal of all believers, both living and dead, from the earth at the end of the present age immediately before the Tribulation begins.

The literal-historical-grammatical exegesis of **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** reveals several components of the Rapture:

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 462-63:

The Return of Christ (v. 16). The Lord Himself will return for His people. The trumpet of God will summon the dead in Christ to their resurrection. (p. 462)



The resurrection (v. 16). At this time only the dead in Christ will be raised. This means believers since the Day of Pentecost, for though there were believers before then, none of them were placed "in Christ." The dead in Christ will be raised just before the living are changed. Yet both groups will experience their respective changes "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). The entire procedure will be instantaneous, not gradual. (pp. 462-63)

The Rapture (v. 17). Strictly speaking, only living believers are raptured. This means they will be caught up into the Lord's presence without having to experience physical death.

A reunion (v. 17). The reunion will be with the Lord and with the loved ones who have died.

The reassurance (v. 18). The truth of the Rapture both comforts and encourages us.

Paul's descriptions of the Rapture in both 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 give no support to the partial Rapture view which teaches that only spiritual believers will be raptured at several times during the Tribulation period. Paul states clearly that "we shall all be changed" at that time. (p. 463)

Pretribulationism. This is the belief that the Rapture will occur prior to the seven-year Tribulation, referred to as Daniel's Seventieth Week with reference to Daniel 9:24-27 and is the subject of our Lord's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. The church is removed before the Seventieth Week commences with the signing of the covenant with the Antichrist in Daniel 9:27.

There are those who do not believe in a literal historic period called the Tribulation but rather interpret the above passages allegorically, so that the Tribulation and Millennium are symbolic of Christian death and resurrection through baptism.

The preterist school interprets the fulfillment of Daniel's seventy weeks by A.D. 70, with the events of the Seventieth Week taking place in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans. More extreme preterists hold that the Second Advent occurred at this time.

Midtribulationists assert that the church will only escape the outpouring of God's wrath during the trumpet and bowl judgments which occur during the last half of the Tribulation, three and one-half years but must endure the seven seal judgments of its first half. Posttribulationists believe that the Rapture occurs at the Second Advent and thus the church must endure the entire heptad. Pretribulationists maintain that the church escapes the Tribulation by asserting that the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation begins. They also argue that the Second Advent occurs prior to the millennial kingdom.