

While it is true that all of the Scripture is inspired and kept free from error, it was not all given by direct revelation from God. Many parts of the Bible describe what people saw, what they thought about, or what they worked out. Since these observations and insights were written down under the control of the Holy Spirit they were kept entirely free from error. Yet other parts of the Scripture came to the writers as a direct revelation from God of facts or ideas that they could not otherwise have known. Paul introduces the interesting information that he is about to give regarding a very important future event with a declaration that it came to him as such a revelation.

One of the most famous of all commentaries on the Bible was written by Matthew Henry about three centuries ago. In connection with this passage in First Thessalonians he calls the event that is there described "this rapture of the church."

Today we think of the term "rapture" as expressing some kind of extreme pleasure or joy. That is exactly the way that all participants in this great event will feel, but it is not what Matthew Henry meant when he used the term in this connection. He was using it in its original sense, expressing the idea of the Latin root from which it is derived. It means being snatched up, or caught away. This rapture of the church is one of the great teachings of the Scripture, even though not explained in equally clear detail in any other passage.

What a marvelous revelation the Apostle Paul received in learning about this great event. Although we have no idea when it will occur it is wonderful to know that the time will come when the Lord will suddenly descend from heaven with a shout and that then all who truly believe in Christ will be raised up to meet Him in the air, together with those who have died in Christ.