I am sometimes torn between wanting to be sensitive to people’s deeply rooted religious convictions and calling a spade a spade. Many readers would be surprised (and dubious) that I have this sensitivity, since I’m often blasted precisely for trouncing people’s religious beliefs. But that’s almost never my intention. The one exception is when it comes to fundamentalism. I have no qualms about attacking Christian fundamentalist thinking head-on. But even then try to be sensitive to the people holding onto this kind of thinking, and I try to engage it with reason and evidence rather than with ridicule. But there are times when it is worthwhile calling a spade a spade, and sometimes we ought to just do that. I’ve been thinking about the passage summarized in the post yesterday from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, the passage from which the fundamentalist view of the “rapture” principally comes from. Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven, the dead in Christ rise first, and then those who are alive who are his followers are snatched up into the air also to meet Jesus in the clouds. This is something that is going to happen very soon. How do we know that Paul thinks it is going to happen very soon? Look at the language he uses. It is the “dead” who will first rise. And then it is “we who are left, who remain until he comes.” Which group does Paul include himself in? He’s one of the ones who will be living at the time. He expects it to happen in his lifetime. So what spade am I calling a spade? I don’t see any way to assess this passage other than to say that it embodies and is embedded in an ancient Christian mythology. I’m not going to ... 

You need to be logged in to see this part of the content. Please Login to access.