

What Must Take Place After This!

(Does the Bible Teach a Rapture?)

Text: Revelation 4:1-2

Main Idea: The rapture of the Church is imminent, will happen in a moment, and will occur prior to the Great Tribulation.

1. **Where** is the rapture found in the Bible? (Jn 14:13, 1 Cor 15:50-57, 1 Thess 4:13-18)

2. **What** actually is the rapture?

- The word rapture is nowhere in Scripture, but comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo*. (13 times in the NT: Matt 11:12, 13:19, Jn 6:15, 10:12, 28, 29, Acts 8:39, 23:10, 2 Cor 12:2, 4, 1 Thess 4:17, Jude 1:23, Rev 12:5). The Latin word used was *raepitius*.
- *Harpazo* means “to snatch, to seize, or to take suddenly and vehemently.”
- The rapture is the snatching up of the Church into heaven to be caught up with Christ in the air.

3. **Is the rapture the same thing as the second coming?**

- There seems to be a clear distinction between the rapture and the second coming of Christ (see chart).
- The rapture seems to be **imminent** while the second coming of Christ has clear signs that must take place before Christ comes (at the end of the Tribulation). (Matt 24)

4. **Who** will participate in the rapture?

- Only believers, those “in Christ” in the Church age will be raptured out. (1Thes 4:16)
- Old Testament believers will not be resurrected until **after** the Great Tribulation. (Is 26:16-19, Dan 12:1-3)

5. **How long** will the rapture take?

- In a **moment**, in the twinkling of an eye.” (1 Cor 15:52)
- *Atomos*, the smallest indivisible unit of time.

6. When will the rapture take place?

9 Reasons for a Pre-tribulation rapture:

- 1) The Tribulation period concerns the nation of **Israel**, not the Church. (Jer 30:7, Dan 9:24, 12:7)
- 2) There is no biblical reference to the **Church** on the earth in Revelation 4-19.
- 3) The Church is promised exemption from the **wrath** of God. (1 Thess 1:9-10, 5:9, Rom 5:9, Rev 3:10, 6:16-17, Eph 2:3-5)
- 4) The doctrine of **imminency** requires a pre-Trib rapture. (1 Cor 1:7, 16:22, Phil 3:20, 4:5, 1 Thess 1:10, Tit 2:13, Heb 9:28, James 5:7-9, 1 Pet 1:13, Jud 1:21, Rev 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20, Rev 22:17, 20)
- 5) The rapture is designed to be a **comfort** for the believing Church. (1 Thess 4:18, Jn 14:1-3)
- 6) The Antichrist cannot come to power until the restraining influence of the **Holy Spirit** is removed. (2 Thess 2:6-7)
- 7) There are clear **differences** between the rapture of the Church and the return of Christ. (see chart)
- 8) There seems to be the need for a time **gap** between the rapture and the second coming in order to fulfill future prophecies: 1) the judgment seat of Christ, 2) the preparation of Christ's bride prior to return with Christ, 3) mortal people must live on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom, 4) the post tribulation judgment of both sheep and goats infer that there will be both believers and unbelievers alive on the earth at the second coming.
- 9) Symbolic **parallels** demand that the rapture must take place before the tribulation, namely Noah, Lot, & Enoch. (Luke 17:26-30, Gen 19:22, 2 Peter 2:5-8, 1 Pet 3:20, Gen 5:24)

Does the Bible Teach a Rapture?

Some have argued that the Bible never speaks about a “rapture.” That is a reasonable concern considering that the word rapture is not found in the Bible. So where does this concept then come from, and is this a real teaching or simply the product of someone’s imagination? (It should be noted that the word Trinity is not found in the Bible and yet it is very clear from Scripture that there is only one God who manifests Himself in three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.). Let’s answer several important questions about this concept known as the rapture.

Where is the rapture found in the Bible?

Does the Bible teach that the Church is going to be raptured out? There are three main rapture passages that describe the “catching away” of the church: John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:50-57, & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In John 14:3, Jesus only briefly introduced the concept telling his troubled disciples that He was leaving them, but also promised, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” The Apostle Paul explains the mystery of this rapture more fully in Corinthians and Thessalonians. A mystery is not a puzzle or something difficult to figure out, but rather truth that was not made known in previous generations but has now been revealed (Eph 3:9). In Corinthians, Paul says, “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” In the Thessalonian passage, Paul teaches us that believers who are alive before the coming of the Lord will be “caught up” together with the dead in Christ who will be raised, and we will all go immediately to be “with the Lord in the air.”

What actually is the rapture?

In the fourth century Jerome translated the Greek New Testament into Latin, consequently, translating the Greek word *harpazo* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 into the word *raeptius*. The Latin word *rapio* means “to seize, snatch or seize away or to take suddenly and vehemently.” This word made its way into the English language as “rapture.” This word appears 13 times in the New Testament (Matt 11:12, 13:19, Jn 6:15, 10:12, 28, 29, Acts 8:39, 23:10, 2 Cor 12:2, 4, 1 Thess 4:17, Jude 1:23, Rev 12:5). A brief survey of these verses reveal that this word is often used to describe the “snatching up” or “catching up” of people to different places. In Acts 8, Philip was “snatched” away and carried from one place to another. In 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul was “caught up” into heaven. Revelation 12:5 speaks of Jesus being caught up to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). So then, the rapture is a description of the Church being “caught up or snatched away” from this world and carried to another location, namely heaven with Jesus in the air.

Is the rapture the same thing as the second coming of Christ?

At this point a distinction has to be made between the rapture and the second coming of Christ. When the two events are closely analyzed, there are clear evidences in Scripture

that teach that the rapture and the second coming of Christ are two separate events. Consider the following chart and analysis.

The Rapture	The Return of Christ (Second Coming)
Christ comes in the air (1 Thess 4:16-17)	Christ comes to earth (Zech 14:4, Rev 19:14)
Christ comes for His saints (1 Thess 4:16-17)	Christ comes with His saints (1 Thess 3:13, Jude 1:14)
Believers depart from the earth (1 Thess 4:16-17)	Unbelievers are taken away (Matt 24:37-41)
Christ claims His bride	Christ comes with His bride
Christ gathers His own (1 Thess 4:16-17)	Angels gather the elect (Matt 24:31)
Christ comes to reward (1 Thess 4:17)	Christ comes to judge (Matt 25:31-46)
Not in the Old Testament but is a mystery revealed in the New Testament (1 Cor 15:51)	Predicted often in the Old Testament
There are no signs. It is imminent	Foretold by many signs (Matt 24:4-29)
It is a time of blessing and comfort (1 Thess 4:17-18)	It is a time of destruction & judgment (2 Thess 2:8-12)
Involves believers only (Jn 14:1-3, 1 Cor 15:51-55, 1 Thess 4:13-18)	Involves Israel & the Gentile nations (Matt 24:1-25:46)
Will occur in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, only His own will see Him (1 Cor 15:51-52)	Will be visible to the entire world (Matt 24:27, Rev 1:7)
Tribulation begins	Millennium begins
Christ comes as the bright morning star (Rev 22:16)	Christ comes as the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2)

Some have concluded that the second coming of Christ comes in two stages. The first stage of Christ's coming is the rapture where Christ doesn't come to the earth, but in the air to snatch His bride, the Church from the world. The second stage of Christ's coming comes at the end of the Tribulation when Jesus comes directly to the earth with His bride to bring judgment on the earth, defeating the Antichrist at Armageddon to set up His millennial kingdom on the earth.

Who will participate in the rapture?

Only believers in Christ who lived during the Church age will participate in the rapture. Thessalonians is clear that the dead "in Christ" will be raised first and then those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the air. The "dead in Christ" are believers who have already died. In this sentence, the assumption is that the reference to "those who are alive" means, "those who are alive in Christ," meaning believers who are still living. To be "in Christ" is a description of New Covenant believers, or the Church. No one prior to Pentecost was considered to be "in Christ" or baptized "in Christ." Therefore, the participants of the rapture will only be people known as church-age believers (both dead and alive), consisting of both Jew and Gentile believers. The logical conclusion then is that the rapture will end this particular church age, and be the start of the Tribulation.

So, what happens to Old Testament believers, or those who were saved prior to Jesus coming? There are two passages in the Old Testament that indicate that Old Covenant saints will be raised in conjunction with the actual second coming of Christ to the earth (Isaiah 26:16-19, Daniel 12:1-3, Rev 20:4-6). Unlike church-age believers who will receive glorified bodies at the rapture prior to the Tribulation, Old Testament believers &

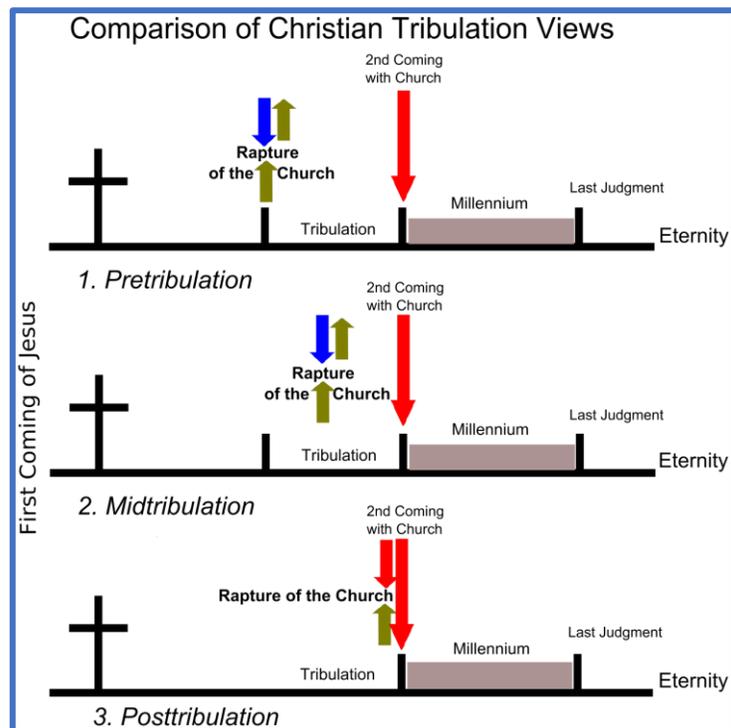
Tribulation believers who died (or martyred) will not receive their glorified bodies until their resurrection at the end of the Great Tribulation before the Millennial Kingdom is established on the earth by Christ Himself.

How long will the rapture take?

According to 1 Corinthians 15:52, the rapture will take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” The word “moment” is the word *atomos* in the Greek. It is the word from which we get the word atom, the smallest unit of matter which is indivisible. The word implies the smallest unit of time. In other words, this rapture will take place in an indivisible moment, or “in an instant” or “in a split second.” Furthermore, Paul says this will happen in the “twinkling of an eye.” The rapture will be something that takes place instantaneously, or in a flash. It will not be observable by the human eye. Immediately the dead in Christ will be raised and we who are in Christ and alive will instantaneously be caught up with Jesus and carried into heaven.

When will the rapture take place?

This is one of the most debatable discussions in current day prophecy. There are three major views (some minor views as well) about when the rapture will take place: a pretribulation rapture, a mid-tribulation rapture, and a post-tribulation rapture. The pre-Trib position believes that the Church will be raptured out prior to the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation. The mid-Trib position believes that the church will be raptured out at the midway point of the Tribulation prior to the great wrath that will come during the second half of the Tribulation. The post-Trib position believes that the rapture and the second coming of Christ are one event that happens at the end of the Tribulation, with the consequence that the Church will go through the outpouring of God’s wrath on the earth.



While each of these positions have their strengths and weaknesses, the pre-tribulation rapture position seems to have the most compelling & Scripture support. Following are nine reasons for believing that the pre-Trib rapture position is the most supported by Scripture.

- 1. The Tribulation period concerns the nation of Israel** (Jer 30:7, Daniel 9:24, 12:7). Three significant passages in the Old Testament give strong evidence that the Tribulation is a time for Israel. Jeremiah states that a day is coming that is greater than any before, and that “it is a time of distress *for Jacob*; yet he shall be saved out of it.” Jacob is the Father of Israel and his name was actually changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28); thus, this time of distress is for Israel, but they will be saved out of it (Romans 11:26). Furthermore, Daniel the prophet writes about the 70 weeks of prophecy, stating that these seventy weeks are “decreed about *your people and your holy city...*” (9:24). Daniel’s people were the Israelites and none other. At the end of Daniel’s prophecy, he writes another astonishing statement. Daniel says that the “time, times and half a time” will be for “the shattering of the power of the holy people” (12:7). All of this makes sense when the promise of Revelation 3:10 reveals that the “hour of trial that is coming on the whole world” is for the purpose “to try those who dwell on the earth.” The “earth dwellers” in the book of Revelation are clearly unbelievers. This description is found eleven times in nine verses in Revelation (3:10, 6:10, 8:13, 11:10 [twice]; 13:8, 12, 14 [twice] 17:2, 8). A close examination of these passages reveals that “earth dwellers” are unsaved people who, during the Tribulation, stubbornly and steadfastly continue in their rejection of God. The Tribulation will serve the purpose of trying the world, & the nation of Israel who will believe and be saved out of the Tribulation. Since the Church already believes in Jesus, there is no purpose for the Church to go through the Tribulation.
- 2. There is no biblical reference to the church on the earth in Revelation chapters 4-19.** The Church is glaringly missing in the main section of Revelation that teaches the details of the Tribulation. It shouldn’t surprise us that the term *ecclesia* (church) is used 19 times in chapters 1-3, while is never used in the following chapters. There are also other indications scattered throughout the book. For example, Chapter 4 describes a vision before the throne of God which is clearly in heaven, and not on the earth. John sees around the throne twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. He also sees “before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God...” These are certainly references to the redeemed who are singing the song of redemption (Rev 5:8-10), the overcomers who have their crowns and live in the place prepared for them. Since at that point Israel hadn’t been saved, this is certainly a description of the Church being rewarded who is in heaven (see Rev 1:20). In chapter 13:9, John uses a phrase “if anyone has an ear, let him hear.” That phrase is used in chapters 1-3 repeatedly to each of the seven churches with an additional qualification, “...what the Spirit says to the churches.” But in chapter 13:9, this phrase is blatantly missing most likely because the Church is nowhere to be found in chapter 13. The omission of the Church throughout Revelation 4-19 is a compelling argument that the Church will have been raptured prior to the Tribulation.
- 3. The Church is promised exemption from divine wrath** (1 Thess 1:9-10, 5:9, Romans 5:9, Rev 3:10, 6:16-17, Eph 2:3-5). The Church is promised to be spared from God’s wrath. It is clear that the Tribulation is actually the very wrath of God (see Rev 6:16-17, 11:18, 15:1, 7, 16:19). For sure the Church will not be spared from trials (Jn 16:33), man’s wrath (2 Tim 3:12), Satan’s wrath (Eph 6:11-12), and the world’s wrath (Jn 15:18-19). But Christ has already taken God’s wrath for believers. The wrath of the Tribulation will be poured out on unbelievers (Rev 3:10).

4. **The doctrine of Imminency requires a pre-Trib rapture.** The Rapture could happen at any moment (1 Cor 1:7, 16:22, Phil 3:20, 4:5, 1 Thess 1:10, Titus 2:13, Heb 9:28, James 5:7-9, 1 Peter 1:13, Jud 1:21, Rev 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20, Rev 22:17, 20). It is important to remember that the rapture is a *sign-less* and imminent event that cannot be discerned, whereas the second coming of Christ to the earth is preceded by many signs that are very observable (Matt 24). All other views (mid-Trib, & post-Trib) fall short at this point. Only the pre-Trib view can fittingly say that the return of Jesus is imminent.

5. **The Rapture is designed to be a comfort for the believing Church** (1 Thess 4:18). The introduction of the rapture by Jesus in John 14:1-3, was intended to be a comfort for the troubling hearts of His disciples. Further Paul says that his teaching of the rapture in 1 Thess 4:18 was to be a “comfort.” It would definitely not be a comfort to the Church to know that the rapture would come after many would experience having their heads cut off by the antichrist, or firsthand experience of the wrath of God. Having the rapture appear *after* all of the trouble that comes on the earth would not be a comfort to anyone! Only the pre-Trib rapture view provides the comfort for the Church that it was intended to do.

6. **The Antichrist cannot come to power until the church’s restraining influence is removed** (2 Thess 2:6-7). The Apostle Paul tells us something very important, namely that the Antichrist is being restrained from appearing on the earth. Paul says, “And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed.” The Tribulation will be initiated not by the rapture, but by a peace treaty that the Antichrist signs with unbelieving Israel (Daniel 9:27). Once that treaty is signed the countdown begins. Paul says that the lawless one (the Antichrist) cannot be revealed until the restrainer is “out of the way.” Since the Antichrist has the very power of Satan (2:9), this restrainer has to be the omnipotent God. No one else would be powerful enough to restrain Satan. For this reason, it is believed that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and working in the world (Jn 16:8). But since the Holy Spirit mainly indwells true believers (Jn 14:16, Rom 8:9), the removal of this restrainer may very well include the removal of the Church. God is holding back the coming of the Antichrist because the Church is still present in the world. Once the Church is removed at the beginning of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will then be “able” to come on the scene. Being Satan incarnate, the Antichrist will then be able to fulfill his lawless acts of hate and violence on the earth.

7. **There are clear differences between the rapture of the Church and the return of Christ.** At the rapture, Christ will return *in the air* and come *for* His church to escort her to the Father’s house (1 Thess 4:16, Jn 14:1-3), while at His second coming He will come *to the earth with* His saints when He descends from heaven to judge His enemies and establish His glorious one-thousand-year Kingdom on Earth (Zech 14:4-5, 1 Thess 3:13). See the above chart for many other differences making it clear that the coming of Christ for His church (rapture) is a different event from the return of Christ to the earth.

8. **Time Gap between the Rapture and the Second Coming.** The Rapture and Second Coming must be two separate events & cannot be simultaneous but must have a gap between them in order to fulfill 4 specific prophecies that must also take place. Each of the following prophecies of necessity require time to which the Pre-Trib rapture position seems to provide. 1) The Judgment seat of Christ must take place where all church-age believers must appear (2 Cor 5:9). Interestingly, the detailed accounts of the second coming of Christ in Rev 19:11-21 don't mention this judgment. The implication is that this *bema* (transliterated word for judgment seat) seat judgment for believers will happen in heaven and be completed before the second coming of Christ to the earth when Jesus brings His people with Him. 2) The preparation of Christ's bride must take place in heaven prior to returning to earth with Christ (Rev 19:7-18). 3) There will clearly be mortal bodied people living on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom (Is 65:20-25) who will carry on normal activities such as farming, building houses, & bearing children. Since this is true, tribulation saints (those who become believers in Christ during the tribulation) must maintain those bodies and not be raptured out after the Tribulation. If every person who became a believer during the Tribulation was raptured out at the end of the Tribulation, there would be no "mortal" bodied people living on the earth to necessarily populate the earth during the Millennial Kingdom. 4) The Post Tribulation judgment of both Sheep and Goats (Matt 25:31-46) infer that there will be both believers and unbelievers alive on the earth at Christ's second coming. This is important, because if the rapture is a post tribulation rapture, then of necessity all Tribulations saints would have been raptured and there would be no "tribulation sheep" left to appear before this judgment. All of these prophecies give strong evidence that the rapture must be a pre-Trib rapture in order to give time for the prophecies to be fulfilled.
9. **Symbolic parallels demand that the rapture must take place before the tribulation.** Jesus teaching on His second coming to the earth is taught in Luke 17:26-30. The paradigm that Jesus draws upon are two events that include judgment, namely Noah and the flood, and Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. These two events have one significant thing in common. In each case the righteous man was first removed from harm's way before God poured out His wrath & judgment. In the case of righteous Lot (Gen 19:22, 2 Pet 2:5-8), the angel told Lot that he could do "nothing" until Lot was safely away in a city called Zoar. In the same way, God did not begin to bring rain down on the earth until Noah and his family were safely (1 Peter 3:20) in the ark. Enoch was also raptured out or taken out of the earth before the flood (Gen 5:24). God is very good at rescuing the righteous and keeping the ungodly under judgment. God has a history of taking his people out of harm's way. The pre-Trib rapture certainly fits God's paradigm perfectly. Certainly, there have been many believers who have experienced horrible deaths throughout history. But it doesn't seem logical that God would allow the *entire* bride of Christ to experience the wrath of God alongside unbelievers on the earth during the Great Tribulation.

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