

When is the Rapture?

Is Jesus Coming Once or Twice?

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A Separate Event or at the Same Time as the 2nd Coming?

There are four main views of the Rapture, and all have to do with timing. The first three view the Rapture as a separate event from the 2nd Coming of Christ. Only the Post-Tribulation view sees both as one event.

Alan S Bandy describes them in his essay, [The Rapture Question](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-Rapture-question/) - (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-Rapture-question/>). His reasoning is clear and direct and is best quoted directly.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture: This belief states that the Rapture will happen when Jesus comes secretly to gather the Church before a 7-year Great Tribulation. He will then come as the 2nd Coming after the Great Tribulation is over.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture: similar to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture except that it happens after the first 3-and-half years of the peace pact and just before the Antichrist takes power.

Pre-Wrath Rapture: This position argues that the Rapture will occur toward the end of the tribulation before the outpouring of bowls of God's wrath before the return of Christ.

Post-Tribulation: This view sees the Rapture happening at the same time as the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. The Post-Tribulation view is that there is only one return of Christ. His believers, both those who have already died and those that are still alive, will rise to meet Jesus in the air as he descends. There is no secret Rapture before the tribulation and the seven-year period begins. This will be an event that everyone will see and know.

Warning Signs

1. Elijah must first come –

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

2. The “falling away” (rebellion or apostasy)

2Thess 2:3 - Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

3. The Antichrist sets up in the Temple as God.

2Th 2:4 - Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

4. Darkness on Earth, Sun, Moon, and stars are darkened.

Six Main Passages on the Rapture

There are only six passages that directly refer to the Rapture. None of them support the idea of a pre-tribulation event. All of them point to the Second Coming as the time for each of them:

Matthew 24:29-31 – After the Tribulation

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. “

Matthew indicates that the Christians will go through the tribulation. It is AFTER the tribulation of those days that Jesus sends His angels to gather His elect. After the endtime signs in the heavens and after all the world is mourning when they see Him coming in the clouds. This is not a secret Rapture that is coming before His return but is happening at the same time.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 – the Dead Rise First

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

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:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

A few things here – it has been said that we have to be raptured first before we can come back with Jesus, but here we see that the dead in Christ will be coming that were already dead. There doesn't need to be a previous Rapture just to populate the crowd following the Lord. There are already plenty already in heaven that can follow Him.

The dead in Christ will rise before we do. The resurrection of the dead happens when Christ returns, not during the pre-tribulation Rapture.

2nd Thessalonians 1:7-8 – Flaming Fire

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Paul is comforting his flock that is already going through persecution. He tells them not to be troubled but to rest with us until Christ comes and is revealed in Heaven in flaming fire. Christ will be revealed in flaming fire at the Second Coming. How much clearer can this be?

2nd Thessalonians 2:1-8 – Apostasia and the Antichrist

*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by **our gathering together unto him**,*

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away** first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

The Day of Christ, or the Day of the Lord, is spoken throughout Scripture as the time when Christ will return in judgment. Paul is comforting his people that had heard some false doctrine that the Rapture had already past. Two things must happen before “our gathering unto Him”: there is a “falling away” or “apostasia”, and the Antichrist is revealed and is finally taken out before the Day of Christ comes. In other words, the Rapture will not happen until these three things happen.

While there is a discussion that the falling away is the “departure” of the Church, the Greek word, “apostasia” is more generally accepted as apostasy or rebellion. It is not hard to believe that the Modern Church is slipping away, becoming more and more worldly, and softer in her doctrine of righteousness, holiness, and the fear of God. Several passages support this, from Amos 8:11-13, Joel chapter 1, Isaiah 32: 9-15, Luke 18:8

I often hear that the Church has to be gone before the Antichrist comes. But here, the Antichrist is to be revealed in his time and sit in the Temple of God BEFORE the Church is gathered unto the Lord. In both Daniel 7:21, 7:25, and Rev. 13:7, the Antichrist is going to make war against the saints. How would that be possible if the saints were already gone?

Daniel 7:21: I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them,

“Dan 7:25 – And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High”.

1st Corinthians 15:51-52, The Great Trumpet

Jesus describes his return and the gathering of the elect using terms remarkable similar to in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 in that both texts make a reference to a “trumpet” blast and Jesus coming in the “clouds” (1Cor. 15:52 also mentions a “trumpet”).

The great sound of the trumpet coincides with the trumpet in Rev. 11 of the 7th trumpet. This will not be a secret event.

1stCor. 15:51-52 - Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The great sound of the trumpet coincides with the trumpet in Rev. 11 of the 7th trumpet.

There are 7 trumpets in the endtime series of events. This is the last one. The last trumpet will sound and THEN we will be changed. The 7th trumpet is recorded in Revelations 11. It is the grand finale after all the wrath of God has been poured out, not the secret Rapture that happens before.

Rev 11:15 - And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Not a Secret Event

This is not a secret event. There is a lot of noise here. First there is a shout, and then the voice of the archangel, and who knows how loud that will be? Certainly, it will be loud enough to be heard, otherwise why would He even bother?

And then, again, that final trumpet that is loud enough to wake the dead.

The major topic that Paul addresses here is not about the timing of the Rapture, but about the resurrection of the dead. Christians were worried about those who had already died had missed it, but Paul reassures them that Jesus will bring them back with Him. There is nothing stated or suggested about the removal of the church prior to or during the tribulation.

Daniel 12:1-3

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people:

and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

I am mentioning this passage simply because it is the only reference I have seen in the Old Testament and should be included here. This is obviously during the Great Tribulation and persecution of the Jews. This does not exclude Christians. It merely identifies the people as "the children of thy people" and "thy people". Certainly, that sounds more like the Jews than the Christians, but it is not absolutely conclusive. As Paul explains fully, we are grafted into that same tree and are inheritors of the promises as true children of Abraham.

However, there is one catching point. If the Rapture includes the raising of the dead, then this Rapture has to happen AFTER the Tribulation described here.

Last Day

John 11:21-24 - Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I

*know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. (24) Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at **the last day**.*

*John 6:44 - No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at **the last day**.*

Notice that Jesus did not correct Martha about “the last day”. The dead will rise on the last day. The last day is exactly that – the very last day – and that is when Jesus comes back.

If the dead in Christ will rise first, then there can be no pretribulation Rapture. It can only happen on the last day.

Shorten the Days for the Elect's Sake

The fact that Christians will be on earth during this time is evident when he says those days will be cut short “for the sake of the elect”

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” (Matt. 24:22)

If we are Raptured out of this tribulation, why would He have to shorten the days?

Some other scriptures that deny a “secret Coming”:

- Rev. 1:7 - Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
- Matt 16:27 - For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Forty-Two Months for the Antichrist

Rev 13:5 - And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Daniel 9:27 - And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Rev 12:14 - And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and

have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 9:27 - And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The Antichrist will be in power for 3 ½ years (42 months/ time, times, and half a time). THEN, he goes to war with the saints – not the Jews, but with the Christians, those with the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Rapture cannot have happened before this.

Cosmic Signs – Darkness on Earth

Joel 2:31 - The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Acts 2:20 - The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

Mark 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Isaiah 13:9-10 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. (10) For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Joel 2:10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

*Matthew 24:29-31 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (30) And **then** shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and **then** shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (31) And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Notice that after these cosmic signs, THEN He will gather His elect.

Not Called to Wrath?

Pre-tribulationists often use the passage in Rev. 3:10 that God will keep the Church from the hour of temptation. They reason that that indicates we will be Raptured out of the great tribulation. I think that is stretching it quite a bit. Here in Isaiah, the entire passage surrounding this scripture is about the resurrection of the dead during the final days. Here it does not say that the Church will be raptured out of the trouble, but it warns the Church to hide until the indignation is past. Rather than being removed before the hour of temptation arrives, perhaps the Lord is going to keep us by hiding us from it.

It will not be past until the Tribulation is over, and Jesus comes back in the final judgment. That may be the hour of temptation Revelations is referring to.

*Revelation 6:9-11 - And when he had opened
Matthew 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be
afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all
nations for my name's sake.*

*John 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues:
yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will
think that he doeth God service.*

*Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou
shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you
into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have
tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I
will give thee a crown of life.*

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 6:9-11 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Daniel 11:35 - And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

Hide until the Indignation is Past:

Isaiah 26: 20-21 - Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Christians Here with Antichrist

Israel is persecuted but then hidden for 3 ½ yrs., the last half of the tribulation. Then, Satan goes after those with the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Christians are still here during the last half.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:12-17

During the 3 ½ months, the Antichrist goes after the Christians. They are still here.

Rev 13:5 - And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Rev 13:7 - And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

A Multitude out of the Great Tribulation

A multitude came out of great tribulation. How would they have been able to find salvation if everyone was gone? So, souls are getting saved during the great tribulation, and the Church is still here.

Rev 7:9-14 - After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

(10) And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

(11) And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

(12) Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom,

*and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might,
be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

*(13) And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,
What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and
whence came they?*

*(14) And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he
said to me, These are they which came out of great
tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made
them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The Elect

It has been said that the Elect are the Jews and not the Christians, but there is nothing in Scripture to back that up.

The word is “eklektos”, which simply means “chosen”. It appears 23 times in the New Testament and refers to Christians in every instance. There are no theological reasons why it would refer only to the Jews in the last days.

We cannot assign meanings to words based solely on our prejudice.

The Greek Text

Apantesis –

In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it says, "*we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,*

to **meet** the Lord in the air."

The Greek word *apantēsis*, was used when a high government dignitary paid an official visit (*parousia*) to a city, and the citizens would go out to "meet" him and escort him into the city with great fanfare. This *apantesis* is not a secret rapture to Heaven but a visible return of the Son of Man to earth with great fanfare and glory.

Parousia –

Paul uses this word to indicate this meeting as a visible event. The Greek word *parousia*, meaning "presence," "arrival," or "coming," is used to refer to the Second Coming of Christ throughout the New Testament:

- Matt. 24:27 – "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
- 1Cor. 15:23 – "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"
- James. 5:8 – "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"
- 1John. 2:28 – "when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Everywhere else *parousia* occurs in the Thessalonian correspondence, it unambiguously refers to the visible return of Christ to the earth:

- 1Thess. 2:19 – "*Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

- 1Thess. 3:13 – “to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” (Clearly the Second Coming).
- 1Thess. 5:23 – “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 2Thes. 2:1 – “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him”
- 2 Thess. 2:8 – “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

In addition, *parousia* is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 when Paul declares that the Lord Jesus will defeat of the man of lawlessness by “the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” If both of these examples refer to his actual second coming to earth, there is absolutely nothing in the context to suggest that 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 should be taken any differently as all the other instances of *parousia* in Thessalonians.

As such, Paul clearly seems to say that the Rapture of the Church happens at the same time as when Christ visibly returns back to the earth and not in a secretive stealing away of the church several years before he actually returns at the end of the age.

Tares and the Wheat

So, the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together **first the tares**, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

(Mat 13:27-30)

He does not say to gather the wheat first. Gather first the tares and then the wheat. This is a bit indirect, I admit, nevertheless, it points away from a Rapture that will take the wheat away first.

Mount of Olives

The question is if He is coming back with the saints or will gather them up first from around the whole world, and THEN come back to the Mount of Olives with the saints.

Another point is that the people mentioned here have

turned many to righteousness. That describes Christians, not Jews. It is not part of Judaism to witness to unbelievers and take them through a prayer of repentance so that they can be saved. Only Christians do that. The Jews consider themselves as saved by default and all the Gentiles as Goyim.

Small points? Perhaps, but they all point to a single, final event when Jesus returns in triumph, and we meet Him in the air.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

Zechariah 14:1-5

A Final Word

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (Matthew 23:23-24)

I don't know if it is really our job to analyze everything so that we have a comprehensive view of the Bible and have everything programmed down to minute detail. Let us remind ourselves that God is Sovereign. He will do what He will do the way He wants to do it. He doesn't need our ideas, counsel, or advice. How the Rapture will happen is thoroughly up to Him.

His last Great Commission to us was not about building denominations, big churches, universities, and great organizations. It was simple – go win the Lost. Period.

Have we forgotten the admonition to save the lost so that we can applaud ourselves because we have everything figured out? Have our religious pursuits caused us to follow a Pied Piper of religious wisdom while hordes of souls are perishing every moment?

Pre-trib, Mid-trib, Post-Trib – who cares? If you're going, you're going. The real issue is, are you taking anyone with you? Proverbs 11:20 tells us that he who wins souls is wise, not he who has everything figured out.

“We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

(1st Corinthians 8:1)