

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#10 Our Blessed Hope

I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Imagine staring into the face of Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat. The mere mention of this event [virtually ignored in many Christian circles] strikes fear and dread in most Christians.

I John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Lutzer: "Preparing for our eternal future should be our highest priority."

A. When Will The Judgment Seat of Christ Happen?

1. The Judgment Of Believers [Church Age] will occur following the RAPTURE.

a. Distinguish differences between the Rapture and the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ

b. Who is designated to participate in the Rapture event?

If you examine the numerous Old Testament predictions of the appearance of the Messiah of Israel, you will find 2 ostensibly contradictory presentations.

1. Many passages portray a suffering servant.

2. Other passages portray a ruling king. These 2 portrayals of the Messiah resulted in a view of anticipating 2 Messiahs > 1 would be a suffering servant; 1 would be the ruling King.

Scholars now recognize there is ONE Messiah in two distinct "comings."

There appears to be a parallel among Christians regarding the 2nd Coming of Christ.

Questions: Is the Church destined for the 7 year Tribulation Period or Heaven?

Is the term "rapture" in the Bible?

The N.T. was written in Greek. The earliest Greek texts used the Greek word "harpazo."

The Greek was translated into Latin. The only Bible used by Western civilization for 1200 years was the Latin Vulgate. The term Rapture, is derived from the Latin word, *rapere*, rapturo, which appears in this Bible. The word "rapere" was translated into several English phrases.

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| 1. Take it by force | Matt. 11:12 | 2. Catcheth away | Matt. 13:19 |
| 3. Pluck them out | John 10:28 | 4. Caught Up | I Thess 4:17>NAS; KJ; NIV |
| 5. Gather Together | Eph. 1:10 | | |

Consider: The concept of the Rapture was NOT revealed to the OT prophets because it is a promise to the New Testament CHURCH and not to the saints of God who lived before the establishment of the Church.

The Old Testament Saints will be resurrected at the end of the 7 year Tribulation period - NOT at the Rapture of the Church. Daniel revealed this fact in Daniel 12:1-2 when he states that the saints of that age will be resurrected at the end of the "time of distress."

Early Church Fathers' Writings:

1. The Shepherd of Hermas - 96 - 150 AD - 1900 years ago, he wrote, "go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast (Roman Emperor) is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, repent and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it."
2. Irenaeus - 130-202 AD - Studied under Polycarp who studied under the Disciple John. 1800 years ago, he said, "When in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning neither shall be."
3. Ephraem the Syrian - 306-373 AD - 1600 years ago, he said, "For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

Earliest indication of a Pre-Trib Rapture in the New Testament:

In Luke 21:7-33 Jesus described the terrible events of the Tribulation.

Luke 21:34-36 *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.*

³⁵ *For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.*

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

1. He stated that it will come upon all them who dwell on the face of the earth.
2. No earth-dweller can escape the judgments of the Tribulation period.
3. Yet there is a way of escaping all these things that shall come to pass.
4. The means of escaping is to "stand before the Son of Man," a standing that must take place off the earth, for there is NO escape on the earth.

The Rapture > Believers are raptured off the earth and stand before the Son of Man.

1st Clear Mention & Promise of the Rapture:

John 14:1-4 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; (promise to believers) that where I am, there you may be also. (purpose of His coming >Take Believers To Heaven) ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

Note: There is NO mention of Jesus coming to earth as He will do at the 2nd Coming.

The New Testament records 2 detailed descriptions of the Lord's return.

Paul > I Thess. 4:13-18

John > Revelation 19:11-16

<p>13. I <u>do not want you to be ignorant</u>, brethren concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.</p>	<p>11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him <i>was</i> called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.</p>
<p>14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus</p>	<p>12. His eyes <i>were</i> like a flame of fire, and on His head <i>were</i> many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.</p>
<p>15. For this we say to you by the <u>word of the Lord</u>, that we who are alive <i>and</i> remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.</p>	<p>13. He <i>was</i> clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.</p>
<p>16. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the <u>DEAD IN CHRIST will rise first</u>.</p>	<p>14. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.</p>
<p>17. Then we who are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.</p>	<p>15. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.</p>
<p>18. Therefore <u>comfort one another</u> with these words.</p>	<p>16. And He has on <i>His</i> robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.</p>

Although both passages focus on Jesus, the similarity ends there.

4 things Paul said in I Thess. 4:13-18

1. God doesn't want His Church ignorant on the subject of the rapture.
2. Paul was giving us the WORD of the LORD.
3. Jesus said dead believers will be raised and the living believers will be caught up with them.
4. Jesus said comfort one another about this.

Characteristics Unique to I Thess. 4:13-18

1. Jesus appears in the heavens. He brings with Him the spirit and soul of those who have died in Him during the Church Age. (Birth of Church at Pentecost > Rapture)
2. Blowing of a trumpet and Jesus descends with a shout, with the voice of an archangel.
3. The dead IN CHRIST (baptized by the Holy Spirit > began in Acts 2) are resurrected.

Characteristics Unique to Rev. 19:11-16

1. The 7 year tribulation period is coming to an end.
2. All the angels and saints in Heaven are shouting "Hallelujah" because the kingdom of the Antichrist has been destroyed. It is time for Jesus to come to earth. (Rev. 19:1-6)
3. Jesus & His Bride return to earth in glory, riding white horses.
4. Christ returns as a warrior to "judge and wage war" against the enemies of God.
5. He returns as an avenger to pour out the wrath of God on those who have rejected God's love and grace.
6. He returns as king to "strike down the nations" and "rule them with a rod of iron."

Summary> I Thess. 4:13-18

Rev. 19:11-16

1. Jesus appears in the heavens.	1. Jesus returns to earth. Zech. 14
2. Jesus comes for His Church.	2. Jesus returns WITH His Bride.
3. Jesus is a Deliverer.	3. Jesus is a Warrior.
4. Jesus appears in grace.	4. Jesus returns in wrath.
5. Jesus appears as a bridegroom.	5. Jesus returns as King of the world.

Scripture portrays Jesus as our Deliverer to Save Us From the Coming Wrath

I Thess. 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which DELIVERED US from the wrath to come.

Paul portrays Jesus as coming FOR His Church, to DELIVER believers from the "wrath that is to come." He is coming to claim the righteous.

Rom. 5:9 says "we shall be Saved From The Wrath of God through Him (Jesus)."

I Thess. 5:9 - For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Our Admonition as we wait for Jesus to Appear as our Deliverer

Luke 21:36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to Stand Before The Son Of Man."

Doctrine of Imminency: The primary thought expressed by *imminency* is that something important is likely to happen, and could do so without delay. While it may not be immediate nor necessarily soon, it is next on the program and may take place at any time.

The term *imminency* normally implies three important truths concerning our Lord's coming:

- (1) While no one knows the time of Christ's return, He may come at any moment and it is possible that He might come today. In the midst of all the trials and sorrows of life, it is the hope of Christ's imminent return which never fails to encourage the troubled heart.
- (2) The Rapture is sign-less, and will be unannounced and largely unexpected.
- (3) No clearly prophesied event must transpire prior to the Rapture, for this might date the time of His coming. If the return of Christ for His Church is imminent, then obviously it will be before the coming period of Tribulation with its clearly predicted signs and judgments.

In theological language, the Rapture of the Church must be *Pretribulational*.

1. Are we to look first for an invasion of the Holy Land by Russia or some other northern confederation?
2. Are we to look for the revelation of Antichrist and his godless ambitions?
3. Are we to look for the predicted Battle of Armageddon with its vast devastation?

We are exhorted to be looking for the coming of Christ from heaven to take His own to the Father's house (John 14:1-3). The Bible calls this our "blessed hope."

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

Scripture teaches believers to expect the Savior from heaven at any moment.

Therefore, we are to always be READY for His return.

Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Heb. 9:27-28 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

I Thess. 1:10 to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I Thess. 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober.

I Peter 1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The Doctrine of Imminence should have a definite bearing on your Christian walk.

Rom. 13:11-12 And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Consider: The salvation here is eschatological rather than soteriological > This salvation is viewed as FUTURE. As each day ends, it brings the believer 1 day closer to the time when the Rapture may occur. Due to imminency, it is time for believers to awaken out of sleep and to live a life consistent with the position of being *sons of light*.

I John 3:2-3 > Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

I John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

I Tim. 6:12, 14 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. Paul admonished us to "keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Luke 19:13 > Occupy until I come.

As we grow in the Lord, we not only LOOK for His appearing, but we LOVE His appearing.

II Tim. 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also

To All Who Have Loved His Appearing.

Consider: A bride in waiting yearns to be married to her Beloved.

In I Thess. 4:15, 17; II Thess. 2:1 > Paul included himself among those who were looking for Christ's return.

Consider > IF there were only 1 future coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the 7 year Tribulation period, these warnings would be pointless. There would be no issue of imminence because there are many prophecies and signals yet to be fulfilled before Jesus can return.

Scripture: Prophecies that must be fulfilled before the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ

1. Daniel 9:27 - A peace treaty must be signed that will guarantee Israel's peace with all of its Arab neighbors.
2. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:1-2 - The Jewish temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem.
3. Rev. 6-18 - The Tribulation must begin and run its 7 year course, resulting in the death of over $\frac{1}{2}$ the world's population.
4. Rev. 12:13-17; Zech. 13:7-9 - The Antichrist must reveal himself and begin an unprecedented persecution of the Jews - one that will result in the death of 2/3 of all the Jews.
5. Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6-7 - The Gospel must be preached to every person on the earth.
6. Rev. 13:16-18 - An unprecedented system of economic control must be established that will prevent persons from buying or selling anything unless they can display on their right hands or foreheads the mark or name of the Antichrist.
7. Rev. 17 & 18 - The worldwide kingdom of the Antichrist must be destroyed in "one hour of one day."

Consider: These and other events are clearly prophesied in Scripture as occurring BEFORE Jesus returns to earth. NONE of them have yet been fulfilled in history.

If these must occur before Jesus comes, why would I be looking for Jesus now?

I should be looking for the Antichrist instead.

Consider: ONLY Matthew speaks of watching for the Antichrist in:

Matt. 24:15 Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"

To whom is Matthew speaking? The Jews living in Israel in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist desecrates the rebuilt temple.

The imminence of His appearing becomes increasingly apparent as the signs of the time point to the events that will culminate with His Second Coming. Some of these events include: the re-establishment of the state of Israel, the Jewish reoccupation of the city of Jerusalem, the reunification of Europe, the rise of the Arab militancy in the Middle East and the whole world coming against Israel over the control of Jerusalem.

Remember: The Rapture DOES NOT kick-off the 7 year Tribulation period.

That event is the signing of a peace treaty that will guarantee the peace of Israel with its Arab neighbors and will authorize the Jews to rebuild their temple. (Dan. 9:27)

1. The Rapture is a "signless" event. The signs in Scripture are related to the 2nd coming at the end of the 7 year Tribulation period.
2. When you see these signs begin to converge and accumulate, you can be assured that the Rapture is definitely going to occur at any moment.

"Like a magnet that draws only iron filings, so the first coming of Jesus Christ will draw only those who know Him into the clouds to meet Him in the air."

Are You Ready?