

The rapture of the church: how close are we?

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (KJV)

“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.”

- This is the clearest, most direct rapture text.
- Caught up = Greek word *harpazō* = **snatched away suddenly**

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 (speaking to the church)

“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 RAPTURE: HOW CLOSE ARE WE?

The bible is clear. There will be a catching away of the church. It will be instantaneous, it will happen on an ordinary day, and it will come as a thief in the night.

Some have seen the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ as a singular event, they are not. They are two separate events, just as the judgement seat of Christ and the great White throne are two separate events.

The Judgement seat of (CHRIST) mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:10

This is Paul addressing the church.

Only the church will stand before this throne during this event.

This is where the saints will be rewarded according to their works.

The great white throne of judgement John talks about in Revelations 20

“And I saw the DEAD, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged according to their works” — Revelation 20:12

So, the Judgement seat of Christ is after the rapture, but before the Coming of the Lord in power and glory.

The great white throne is after the tribulation, after Millennial Kingdom, after Satan’s final judgment and at the end of human history

Caveat: just as the first coming of Christ refers to the entire 33 and a half years that were the days of his flesh, the second coming refers to the entire age beginning with the rapture and ending in the the coming of the Lord in power and glory; and includes the tribulation period.

The Tribulation is a future, seven-year period of unprecedented global distress and divine judgment, identified with Daniel’s 70th Week, during which God pours out wrath on a rebellious world, turns to Israel, and sets the stage for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, there are multiple views on the timing of the rapture;

Pre- trib, rapture before tribulation

mid-trib, rapture sometime after the tribulation begins and before it ends

post-trib, rapture happens at the end of the tribulation

pre-wrath, rapture happens during the tribulation, but before Gods wrath is poured out.

It is my contention that the only logical conclusion is a pre-tribulation rapture. It is the only thing, in my opinion, that harmonizes all the scripture concerning it.

I. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaches that: Jesus Christ will **secretly and suddenly** catch away His Church **before** the Tribulation.

- This event is **distinct** from the Second Coming of Christ, when Jesus returns visibly to the earth **after** the Tribulation.
- **Rapture** - Christ comes **for** His saints (in the air)
- **Second Coming** - Christ comes **with** His saints (to the earth)

The rapture is an instant selective event that involves only the church.

But at the second coming “every eye shall see him”

II. The tribulation will be a time of the Lords Wrath. Wrath is a divinely appointed period of judgement. It is a proper noun that describes a specific period of judgement being poured out.

3. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:10

Jesus, which delivered us from the **wrath to come**.

4. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to **wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. REVELATION 3:10 (KJV)

I also will keep thee **from** the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world...

- “Keep thee **from**” = *ek tēs hōras*
It means **out of**, not preserved within

2 Timothy 3

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Persecution and the Day of the Wrath of God are not synonymous.

III. The word “church” (ekklesia) appears 19 times in chapters 1–3

Then at the beginning of Chapter 4 John writes:

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, come up hither...

Then the word “church” or ekklesia completely disappears during what are known as the tribulation chapters.

Then the church reappears again in chapter 19 returning with Christ at the second coming.

THERE ARE PEOPLE SAVED DURING THE TRIBULATION, BUT THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE CHURCH AGE. THESE WILL BE MARTYRS, JEWS, AMONG OTHERS. THEY ARE NEVER CALLED THE BRIDE OF CHRIST OR THE CHURCH AS THE CHURCH AGE HAS ENDED.

IV. The Restrainer Must Be Removed (before Antichrist Revealed)

6. 2 THESSALONIANS 2 Berean standard version

6 And you know what is now restraining him (the antichrist), so that he may be revealed at the proper time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is taken out of the way.

8 And then that lawless or wicked ONE will be revealed

- The **Restrainer** is the Holy Spirit working through the Church
- Once the Church is removed, the Antichrist is revealed
- Tribulation begins **after** this removal

V. Biblically there is a distinction Between Israel and the Church or natural Israel and spiritual Israel.

Daniel 9:24–27 describes Daniel’s 70 Weeks

69 weeks (483 years) fulfilled

1 week (7 years) still future

Look at the Fulfillment of the First 69 Weeks

Timeline:

- Starts with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2 – 445/444 BC)

Daniel 9:26

“After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...”

This was fulfilled at the crucifixion of Jesus

Then the prophecy pauses.

It's called the Prophetic Gap (it is my favorite gap of all time)

Between verse 26 and verse 27 is we find this gap

Why the gap?

- **Israel rejected the Messiah**
- **God temporarily turned to the Gentiles (Romans 11:25)**
- **The Church was a mystery, not revealed in Daniel. Ephesians 3 eludes to this.**

It is important to note, the gap was for the church age, but all 70 weeks were determined for Israel.

The 70th Week (Tribulation) resumes **after the Church age ends**

The Tribulation is called the time of **Jacob's trouble**, not the Church's purging
(Jeremiah 30:7)

Daniel 9:27 (KJV)

“And he (the antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week...”

This final week (7 years) is what we call:

Daniel's 70th Week

It is:

- **A future, seven-year period**
- **Focused on Israel**
- **Marked by covenant, betrayal, tribulation, and judgment**

Romans 11 gives us proof that the church age was the gap, but God will turn back to natural Israel again.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved:

Luke 21:24 (KJV) Jesus speaking

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (This is speaking of the church age)

UNTIL...

After the rapture of the church God will return to natural Israel again.

XV. The cornerstone verse of the post tribulation view is Matthew 24:29–32

Matthew 24:29–32

29 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.

32 **Now learn a parable of the fig tree;** when the branch is yet tender, and put forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

I. Context Matters: It is important not to conflate the whole chapter into one event, but it is addressing an entire age.

Matthew 24 Is a Jewish Context, Not a Church Context

Key Verse: Matthew 24:3

“What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?”

This is **not** a Church-age question.

II. Who Are “The Elect” in Matthew 24?

“Elect” Does Not Always Mean the Church

In Scripture, “elect” can refer to: Israel, Tribulation saints, Angels, or The Church (depending on context) Jesus was addressing Old Testament Jews who would have completely rejected the idea of Elect meaning the church.

Isaiah said: He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel

In Matthew 24’s elect:

- They are **scattered**
- Regathered **from the four winds**
- This perfectly aligns with **Israel’s prophesied restoration**

It also matches Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel

It does **not** match the Church, which is:

- Already glorified
- Already gathered
- Returning **with Christ** at this point

III. The Trumpet in Matthew 24:31 Is Not the Rapture Trumpet

A major confusion point is the word “**trumpet.**”

There are many trumpets. The last trump signals the end of an age. The last trump does not mean the final trumpet that will ever be blown.

IV. In the Rapture:

- **The Lord himself shall descend... with the trump of God**

In Matthew 24:31

- It is the **Angels** gather the elect

V. These Matthew 24 scriptures Fit Perfectly with Revelation 19

Matthew 24:30

30 They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory

This aligns exactly with:

- Christ's visible return
- Armageddon
- Judgment of the nations
- Establishment of the Kingdom

It does **not** describe:

- A secret catching away
- A mystery event
- A comfort-focused promise

Matthew 24

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.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree;

FIG TREE = ISRAEL

Then in Matthew 24:36 Christ changes from a succinct description of events and says

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Then he goes into talking about the as it was in the days of Noah.

It is significant to note that the actual Greek wording translated but in verse 36 is Peri De. Which always signifies a shift in topic.

Jesus separates Matthew 24:1-35 from verse 36-51

Let's look at Revelations 19

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife (no longer bride) hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

THIS IS OBVIOUSLY POST RAPTURE, POST MARRIAGE, POST MARRIAGE SUPPER.

(LOOK AT CHART)

Rapture vs second coming (in power and glory)

THE RAPTURE

- Christ **appears in the air** for His Church
- The **catching up** (*harpazō*) of all Church-age believers
- Church-age believers are taken to the **Father's house in Heaven**
- **No judgment on earth** at the Rapture
- The **Church is gathered together to Jesus**
- **Only the Rapture** is taught as **imminent**
- **No signs** precede the Rapture
- The Rapture affects **only believers**
- The Rapture is a time of **great joy and comfort**
- The Rapture **must precede** the revealing of Antichrist
- **No mention of Satan** at the Rapture
- **Only those looking for Him** are involved
- The **Judgment Seat of Christ** takes place **in Heaven**
- At the Rapture, the **Tribulation begins on earth**
- The Rapture takes the Church to the **Marriage Supper of the Lamb**
- At the Rapture, a **metamorphosis (transformation)** is described
 - “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”

THE SECOND COMING

- Christ **returns to the earth** with His Church
- **No catching up** occurs
- Tribulation-age believers are **not taken to the Father's house**

- Christ **judges the inhabitants of the earth**
- Jesus **gathers the nations** for judgment
- The Second Coming **cannot occur** until **after the Tribulation**

- **Hundreds of signs** precede the Second Coming
- The Second Coming affects **all humanity**
- It is a time of **fear, mourning, and judgment**
- The Second Coming happens **immediately after the Tribulation**

- **Satan is bound** in the abyss
- **Every eye shall see Him**
- There is **no Judgment Seat of Christ** on earth
- At the Second Coming, the **Millennial Kingdom** begins
- Christ and His **Bride descend together**
- **No metamorphosis or transformation** is described

KEY SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Rapture is a rescue.

The Second Coming is a reckoning.

The Rapture removes the Church.

The Second Coming rules the world.

The Rapture brings comfort.

The Second Coming brings correction.

*The Rapture is Christ coming **for** His Bride,*

*and the Second Coming is Christ returning **with** His Bride.*

VI. Perhaps the greatest convincer for me in a pretrib rapture is the Doctrine of Imminence

What Is Imminence?

- Christ can return **at any moment**
- No prophetic signs required beforehand

Most the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ in power in glory have detailed sequence of signs and timings.

For example, Daniel 12:11 says the abomination of desolation will stand for 1290 days. So, there is predictability to it. In fact, the first 69 weeks of Daniel were spot on.

The second coming of the Lord in power in glory is full of signs, but the catching away of the bride is both imminent and incalculable.

In my opinion the Pre-Tribulation Rapture:

- Best harmonizes **all prophetic passages**
- Preserves **imminence**
- Honors **God's promises to the Church**
- Maintains the **distinct purposes** of Israel and the Church
- Avoids internal contradictions

Look at the difference in conditions between the rapture and the coming of the LORD.

1. Before his 2nd coming in power and glory all hell will be breaking out on the earth. (Revelations, Jeremiah, Daniel) (trumpets, seals, vials) It's so bad prior to the second coming that Jesus said that if he did not cut that time short all flesh would be dead.

2. Prior to the rapture normal life is going on. It is so normal that it catches the world completely off guard and the church, if not watching, can miss it.

Look at the scriptures to the church concerning the rapture.

Watch... for you know not what hour...

Be ye also ready...

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour...

Take heed to yourselves... lest that day come upon you unaware.

Watch, for I will come as a thief in the night.

Let us not sleep, but let us watch and be sober.

Looking for that blessed hope of our great God and savior.

So, how close are we?

What are some biblical signs that we are getting closer to the rapture and the great tribulation?

1. There will be an assault on nationalism and a big push for globalism, preparing the Infrastructure of the Antichrist System

The Tribulation requires:

- A **global political framework**
- A **global economic system**
- A **global information/monitoring capability**

You will be seeing:

- Centralized financial systems
- Digital currency discussions
- Global governance language (“shared future,” “global solutions”)
- Surveillance normalization

The Antichrist does not create the one world system, he inherits it.

2. There Will Be Moral Collapse and A Reversal of Moral Order

Key traits:

- Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God
- A collapse of natural affection
- Truth treated as hate
- Self elevated above God
- Authority despised, restraint mocked

4. Delusion Replacing Discernment and Truth

- Emotional truth over objective truth
(social gospel instead of absolutes)
- Science weaponized by ideology
- Mass deception accepted even when contradictory
- Critical thinking labeled dangerous

5. Israel Restored and Center Stage Again

- Israel reborn as a nation (1948)
- Jerusalem a global political obsession
- Peace and security language surrounding Israel
(Peace in the Middle East)
- Growing pressure to divide the Israel (Joel 3:2)

6. Apostasy In the Church

- Doctrines adjusted to culture
- Sin merely redefined rather than repented of
- Holiness mocked as legalism and religion
- Form without fire

7. Increasing Hatred of Biblical Conviction

- Biblical truth labeled extremist and hate speech
- Moral absolutes criminalized socially
- Christians tolerated only if silent

8. Technology That Makes Revelation 13 Possible

The mark of the beast's system requires:

- Universal identification
- Cashless dependency
- Controlled access to commerce

9. A Generation Conditioned for Emergency Rule

- Fear normalized
- Emergency powers accepted
- Rights surrendered for safety

The Antichrist rises as a solution, not a villain.

A Critical Distinction (Very Important)

These signs do not mean the Tribulation has started.
They indicate the stage is being set.

Jesus' Final Instruction

Luke 21:28 (KJV)

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Not fear.

Not speculation.

But **readiness, holiness, and urgency.**

So, I pose the question to you... How close are we?

Do you recognize the rise of these things in our world today?

How many of these things do you recognize?

If these things are setting the stage for the tribulation and the rapture will start the tribulation, how close do you think we are?

The bible is very clear, there will be a rapture of the church. It will be just another ordinary day, then suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1/44th of a second) the church will be gone.

I want to be one of the ones that hears the sound of that trumpet!

Hebrews 9

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and **unto them that look for him** shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

FLESH CHECK

When's the last time you thought about the rapture?

How many times did you think about the rapture of the church last year?

Titus 2

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.