

The Rapture Is Not the Second Coming of Christ

1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

What’s the next event in Bible prophecy? Many theologians today roll end-time prophecies into one big event – the end of the world and Jesus’ second coming. But 1 Thess. 4.13-18 reveals a separate event – *not the ‘Second Coming’* – that Christians look forward to.

Nay-Sayers in the First Century...and Today!

Why the Rapture is *NOT* the Second Coming of Christ

<b>RAPTURE</b>	<b>SECOND COMING</b>
A ‘mystery’ revealed only in the New Testament (1 Cor 15.51; 1 Thess. 4.15a)	A fundamental truth revealed in both Testaments (all OT Kingdom prophecies; cf. Jude 14f)
Imminent, without warning signs (1 Cor 15.52; 1 Thess. 4.16)	Not imminent, has warning signs (Mt. 24.29-31; Mk. 13.24-27; Acts 2.19-21; 2 Thess. 2.1-4; Rev. 6-19)
Before the Great Tribulation (1 Thess. 1.10; 5.9; Rev. 3.10)	Climaxes the time of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 19.11-21)
Invisible, only known by Christians (1 Thess. 1.10; 4.14-17)	Seen by the entire world (Mt. 24.27; Lk. 21.27; Rev. 1.7)
Christ will meet Christians in the air (clouds) (1 Thess. 4.17)	Christ will reign on earth (Jerusalem) (Zech.14.4,9; Mt.25.31; Rev.20.4-6)
Delivers Christians from time of wrath coming on the earth (1 Thess. 1.10; Rev. 3.10)	Culminates or concludes the time of wrath on the earth (Mt. 25.31-46; Rev. 19.15)
Believers go to be with the Lord in heaven (Jn. 14.2-3; 1 Thess. 4.17)	Believers on earth with Christ in His Millennial reign (Rev. 5.10; 20.4-6)
Church is removed from the earth (1 Thess. 4.13-18)	Satan is removed from the earth! (Rev. 20.1-3)
Gives hope and comfort to Christians today (1 Thess. 4.18)	Gives hope and comfort to Tribulation saints (Lk. 21.20-28)



1. Biblical prophecy can be a minefield: Cults have put forward bizarre theories over the last 2000 years. To avoid such errors, we must follow two rules. If it is unclear what a prophecy may refer to, avoid dogmatism. But if a prophecy is unambiguous and clear, take it literally. What parts of 1 Thess. 4.13-18 are unclear? What parts are clear? What questions are unanswered?
2. While cults hold strange second coming views, contemporary religious scholars often deny end-times prophecies altogether. Atheist Bart Ehrman recently stated on the NPR program *Fresh Air* that all end-time prophecies, including heaven and hell, are religious myths made up by men (I wish NPR would interview evangelical scholars!). To see what people in the last days will say about Jesus’ return, see 2 Peter 3.3-7. Amazingly, Ehrman’s words echo this prophecy.
3. The Christians in Thessalonica knew that ‘the day of the Lord’ would come unexpectedly, suddenly (see 1 Thess. 5.2-3). We’ll discuss what ‘the day of the Lord’ refers to later, but clearly, it arrives without warning. What does Paul reveal about the initial event of this ‘day’ in 1 Thess. 4.14? 4.15? 4.16? 4.17?
4. The Second Coming of Christ is prophesied most completely in Revelation 19.11-21. The signs it is about to happen are given in many passages (Mt. 24.29-31; Mk. 13.24-27; Acts 2.19-21; 2 Thess. 2.1-4). After reading all these passages, compare and contrast the Rapture with the Second Coming.
5. Two results of the event Paul describes in these verses should not be missed: First, it will deliver us from ‘the wrath to come’ for which “God has not destined us” (see 1 Thess. 1.10; 5.9). Second, it will provide Christians with comfort (4.18). What is ‘the wrath to come’? How would this prophecy be comforting to Christians in Thessalonica? Is it still comforting to believers today? How?