

The Rapture of the Church Is Not the Second Coming of Christ

By Dave DeWitt

Thesis

There is much teaching today which says there is no Rapture distinct from the Second Coming of Christ. Especially, there is the claim that the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is just another description of the Second Coming. Here, I will list three of the passages that describe the Second Coming and three that refer to the Rapture. The question dealt with here is not about the timing of the Rapture (pre/partial/mid/post). The question I will consider here is, "Do these passages all describe the same occurrence?" My conclusion is that they are, by observation, clearly different events.

The Second Coming of Christ

Zechariah 14:2-4, 6, *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the **houses plundered, the women ravished**, and half of the city exiled...Then the LORD will go forth and **fight against those nations**, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will **be split in its middle from east to west** by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south...In that day there will be no light; the **luminaries will dwindle**.*

Matthew 24:27-31, *For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. But **immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be **darkened, and the moon will not give its light**, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of **the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn**, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they **will gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*

Revelation 19:11, *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness **He judges and wages war**.*

Revelation 19:15, *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may **strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron**; and He treads the wine press of the fierce **wrath of God**, the Almighty.*

Revelation 19:17-18, *Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to **all the birds which fly in midheaven**, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may **eat the flesh** of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.*

Observations about the Second Coming

1. It is an event predicted in both the Old and New Testaments. It was an event Christians knew about.
2. It will occur *immediately* after a time of great tribulation on the earth.
3. It will be a public event witnessed by the whole world.
4. The *luminaries will dwindle*, the visibility of the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened.
5. Jesus comes to earth on the Mount of Olives, which splits in two.
6. *The Son of Man will appear in the sky*, and when He does, *all the tribes of the earth will mourn*.
7. Angels will *gather together His elect* believers from all over the earth.
8. Jesus will *strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron*.
9. The event will be an expression of *the fierce wrath of God*.
10. The deaths on the earth will be so extensive that the birds will be called to eat their flesh.

The Rapture of the Church

John 14:1-3, *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 will be changed.*

Observations about the Rapture

1. It is an event Christians were uninformed about from the Old Testament.
2. Knowledge of this event would bring a peace of mind, *Do not let your heart be troubled.*
3. It is an event where Jesus will come to receive believers to Himself, *in the air.*
4. The event will take believers to a place Jesus is preparing for them, *in My Father's house.*
5. The event is a mystery, something unknown to the Old Testament prophets.
6. Believers are told about this event so that *you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.*
7. The event is about the bodily resurrection of believers, not the killing of unbelievers.
8. Living believers are *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*
9. Believers are to *comfort one another with these words.*
10. The whole movement of the event is up, in the air, then to the Father's house—not down to the earth.

Why the Rapture Cannot Be the Second Coming

1. The Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and John in Revelation all discuss the Second Coming in sequence with other end-time events, preceded by a tribulation and followed by an earthly kingdom. Nothing like the Rapture is mentioned in any sequence passage.
2. The Second Coming of Christ is not an imminent event, many things must take place before it can happen (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 24:15-30; Revelation chapters 6–18). The Rapture is imminent, which can happen at any time (Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
3. The Second Coming is about war on earth, the killing of multitudes of people, and regathering of the remnant of all 12 tribes of Israel to Jerusalem. The Rapture is only for the church, which is a mystery not known to the Old Testament prophets (Ephesians 3:3-9).
4. The Rapture is about blessings, resurrection, deliverance, and rewards. The Second Coming is about fear, destruction, death, and judgment.