

Distinctions Between the Rapture and the Second Coming

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The Church will be Raptured Before the Tribulation

The church, in its entirety, will, by resurrection and translation, be removed from the earth before (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9) any part of the seven-year Tribulation begins. (Revelation 6:16-17 shows the wrath of God in the first parts of the Tribulation.) *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 shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The church and Israel are two distinct groups with whom God has a divine plan. The church is a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament (Ephesians 2:13-16; 3:3-9). This present mystery age interrupts the program of God for Israel because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah at His first coming. This mystery program must be completed before God will resume His program with Israel and bring it to completion.

Distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming

The Rapture

- All believers are removed from the earth.
- Christ never appears on the earth.
- The saints are caught up into the air. (The action is up.)
- Christ comes to claim a bride.
- The Tribulation is about to begin.
- It is an imminent event.
- It brings a message of comfort.
- It is related to the church.
- It is a mystery (not revealed in the Old Testament).
- Believers are rewarded.
- Creation is unchanged.
- The Gentiles as a group are unaffected.
- Israel's covenants are unaffected.
- It takes place before the Day of Wrath.
- The expectation of the church is that *the Lord is at hand* (Phil. 4:5).
- The church is taken into the Lord's presence.
- It's a blessing for believers.

The Second Coming

- All unbelievers are removed from the earth.
- Christ appears to all the earth.
- Christ returns to the earth. (The action is down.)
- Christ returns with a bride.
- The Millennial Kingdom is about to begin.
- It is preceded by a multitude of signs.
- It brings a message of fear and judgment.
- It is related to Israel and the world.
- It is revealed in both Testaments.
- Gentiles and Israel are judged.
- Creation is changed.
- The Gentiles are judged.
- Israel's covenants are fulfilled.
- It follows the Day of Wrath.
- The expectation of Israel is that *the Kingdom is at hand* (Matt. 24:14).
- Israel is taken into the Kingdom.
- It's a judgment for unbelievers.

The Rapture is Imminent

Many signs were given to Israel which would precede the Second Coming of Christ. But to the church no such signs were given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent (at any moment) coming of the Lord (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:14; James 5:8). **Believers are to be expecting an any-minute Rapture, not looking for signs that precede His coming.**