Will there be a rapture?

Apologetics · https://thebiblicalroots.org/answers/will-there-be-a-rapture/

It depends on what you mean by the word “rapture.” The Bible clearly teaches that believers will be “caught up” to meet Christ at His return (1 Thess. 4:17). However, it does **not** clearly teach the popular idea of a secret rapture in which Christians disappear from the earth years before Christ's final return.

Many sincere Christians believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, while others hold mid-tribulation, post-tribulation, or amillennial views. At The Biblical Roots Ministries, we believe the New Testament consistently presents **one visible, glorious return of Christ** that brings the resurrection of the dead, the gathering of believers, the final judgment, and the renewal of creation—not two separate comings of Christ separated by seven years.

Where does the word “rapture” come from?

The English word *rapture* does not appear in most Bible translations, but it comes from the Latin *rapiemur*, which translates the Greek verb *harpazō* (“to seize,” “to snatch,” or “to catch up”) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Paul writes:

> “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

The question is not whether believers will be caught up—they will. The question is **when** this occurs and **what happens next**.

One return or two?

The modern doctrine of a secret pre-tribulation rapture teaches that Christ returns twice: first, secretly, to remove the Church before a seven-year tribulation; then again later to establish His kingdom.

The difficulty is that no passage explicitly describes these as two separate events. Instead, the New Testament repeatedly speaks of **the** return of Christ in the singular.

When Paul describes believers being caught up in 1 Thessalonians 4, the event is anything but secret. Christ descends “with a cry of command,” “with the voice of an archangel,” and “with the trumpet of God.” The dead are raised, living believers are transformed, and all are gathered to Christ. This is resurrection language, not the description of a hidden departure.

Likewise, Jesus says:

> “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30).

His return is visible, public, and worldwide.

What does it mean to “meet” the Lord?

An often-overlooked detail appears in the Greek word translated “meet” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Paul uses the noun *apántēsis*, a term commonly used for citizens going out to welcome an arriving king or dignitary and then accompanying him into the city.

The same word appears in Matthew 25:6, where the wedding party goes out to meet the bridegroom, and in Acts 28:15, where Roman believers travel out to meet Paul and escort him into Rome.

This suggests that believers rise to welcome Christ as He returns in glory rather than being permanently removed from the earth. The emphasis is on greeting the returning King, not escaping the world. While this observation is not by itself decisive, it fits naturally with the broader New Testament picture of Christ's single, victorious return.

What is the believer's hope?

Throughout the New Testament, the Christian's hope is consistently focused on Christ's appearing, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the renewal of creation.

Paul teaches that the resurrection occurs at Christ's coming (1 Cor. 15:22–26, 51–57). Peter points believers to “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13). John sees the New Jerusalem descending to a renewed earth where God dwells with His people forever (Rev. 21–22).

The emphasis is not on believers permanently leaving the earth but on God making all things new.

A note on differing views

Faithful evangelical Christians have held different views of the end times for centuries. Premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists all affirm Christ's bodily return, the resurrection, and the final judgment, while differing over the timing and nature of certain prophetic events.

Likewise, many Bible-believing Christians sincerely hold to a pre-tribulation rapture. While we respectfully disagree with that conclusion, we recognize it as an intramural disagreement among believers rather than a test of Christian orthodoxy.

Key Scriptures to Study

- **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18** — Believers are caught up to meet Christ at His return.
- **1 Corinthians 15:22–26, 51–57** — The resurrection occurs when Christ comes.
- **Matthew 24:29–31** — Christ returns visibly and gathers His elect.
- **John 5:28–29** — One resurrection leading to judgment.
- **2 Peter 3:10–13** — Christ's return brings the renewal of creation.
- **Titus 2:13** — Christians await the “blessed hope,” the appearing of Christ.
- **Revelation 20:11–15** — The final judgment.
- **Revelation 21:1–5** — The new heavens and new earth.

Objections & Misconceptions

Doesn't 1 Thessalonians 4 clearly describe a rapture?
Yes, it describes believers being “caught up” to meet Christ. The question is whether this is a separate, secret event before the Second Coming or part of Christ's single, public return. The passage itself describes a loud, visible event accompanied by the resurrection of the dead.

Isn't the Church absent from Revelation after chapter 3?
That argument is based on inference rather than explicit teaching. Revelation never states that the Church has been removed from the earth because of a pre-tribulation rapture.

If there isn't a secret rapture, what is the Christian's hope?
The New Testament consistently points believers to Christ's glorious appearing, the resurrection of the dead, the defeat of death, the final judgment, and the renewal of all creation. That is the blessed hope held out throughout Scripture.

Why This Matters

Our hope as Christians is not escape from the world but the return of our King. Scripture encourages believers to persevere through trials, trusting that Christ will return in glory to raise the dead, judge evil, and make all things new.

Keeping our focus on Christ's visible return also reminds us that history is moving toward one great climax: the triumph of Jesus over sin, death, and Satan. That future hope gives Christians confidence, endurance, and joy regardless of what trials may come before His appearing.

Recommended Resources

- Anthony A. Hoekema — *The Bible and the Future*
- Kim Riddlebarger — *A Case for Amillennialism*
- George Eldon Ladd — *The Blessed Hope*
- Craig L. Blomberg — *A New Testament Theology*
- N. T. Wright — *Surprised by Hope*