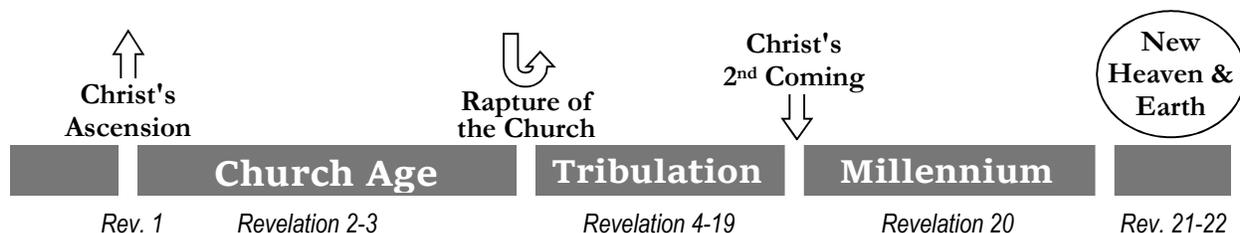


## THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The rapture is debated among Bible-believing Christians. Some believe that Christ will come and “snatch away” the church before the “day of the Lord” and “tribulation” begins on the earth (Jn. 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-17). Others believe that the church will go through parts or all of the coming tribulation. Some think the whole discussion is crazy and pointless because the tribulation and millennium are symbolic concepts that should not be taken literally. The following is an overview of the premillennial view of the rapture and the reasons for it.



- The 70 Weeks of Daniel (9:24-27).** God promised to work through Israel for 70 "sevens" (i.e., 490 years). 483 years have passed, leaving the seven years of the tribulation. Since God will once again be working through Israel during the tribulation (e.g., 144,000 witnesses, Rev. 7:1-8), it seems logical that the church will no longer be present.
- The Chronology of Revelation.** The book of Revelation appears to present a chronology from the beginning of the church age to the end of time. If this is true, the seven churches symbolically picture the history of the church. And Revelation 4 (John's translation into heaven) could picture the rapture. Interestingly, the word "church" occurs 19x in the first three chapters of Revelation and then does not occur again until Rev. 22:16.
- God's Promise.** 1 Thessalonians 5:9 states, "*For God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Revelation 3:10 states, "*I will also keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*" God promises to preserve His people from His outpouring of wrath.
- God's Pattern.** God's pattern throughout history seems to be that of preserving His people from coming wrath (e.g., Noah and the ark, Lot and his daughters, the Exodus).
- The Rise of Lawlessness.** 2 Thessalonians 2:7 indicates that the restraint against lawlessness will be removed before the coming of the Antichrist. The rapture of the church would almost certainly result in an increase in moral lawlessness as the voice for biblical truth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would be removed from the earth.
- The Imminence of the Rapture.** God gives no signs to precede the rapture. It is to be expected at any moment (cf. Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-9).
- The Differences between the Rapture and 2nd Coming.**

The Rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

- We meet Christ in the air
- We go from earth to heaven
- No signs preceding
- Brings comfort to believers

The Second Coming (cf. Rev. 19:11-21)

- We return with Christ to the earth
- We come from heaven to earth
- Many signs preceding
- Brings judgment on the world