

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

1 Thes 4:16 **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.** NKJV

1 Thes 4:17 **Then we who are alive (in Christ) and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**

The word "rapture" is not used in the English Bible. But it comes from a translation of the above expression 'caught up' which in the Latin Bible is "Raptura". Many believe that this rapture of the true church occurs at God's invitation to "come up here" of Revelation 4:1:

Rev 4:1 **After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here"... then a "great tribulation" comes upon the earth.**

Who actually gets raised from the dead? Everyone, both the righteous and unrighteous:

John 5:28-29 (Jesus) **...All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life (that is, their bodies translated into heavenly bodies, to re-unite with their spirits that were in Christ), and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (but only their spirits that were in hell) .**

Acts 24:15 **...There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (both of the righteous and unrighteous – Amp).** KJV

How many resurrections will there be? Two – what are they? Is the first in two stages?

The Bible identifies the next major period in human history as the thousand year reign (millennium reign) of Christ on this earth with His saints. There is to be one resurrection before the thousand years, consisting of His saints who are going to reign with Him; And a second resurrection after the thousand year reign of everyone who did not participate in the first resurrection, together with those who were born during the thousand year reign.

Rev 20:4-5 **...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power...**

While the beginning of this verse identifies, as reigning with Christ, those who came to Christ during the great tribulation; they also include, as R A Torrey notes in his book "The Lord's Return", every Christian that died "in Christ" or was living "in Christ", righteous and holy, who were raptured before the tribulation. For Rev 5:10 states they too will reign with Christ In the millennium. This means that there are two stages to the first resurrection:

The two stages of the first resurrection – one before and one after the great tribulation:

The Bible refers to a “great tribulation” to pre-cede Christ’s thousand year reign. In it the Antichrist is revealed, wickedness reigns, and many judgments are poured out on the earth. Bible teachers including R A Torrey and A B Simpson in his “Christ in the Bible” commentary, refer to the First resurrection as being in two stages. The first and bigger stage consists of all the dead and living “in Christ” raptured to meet Christ in the air just prior to the great tribulation. And a second and smaller stage during and/or after the great tribulation, of those who enter into Christ and who either die during or survive the great tribulation. When Christ then comes to earth at the end of the tribulation to start His reign, He comes with all His saints from every part of history to that point in time (1 Thes. 3:13).

Matt 24:21 (Jesus) **For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.**

Opinions differ on the length of the great tribulation, but many believe it will be seven years corresponding to the seventieth week (of years) prophesied in the book of Daniel.

Dan 9:27 **Then he (the anti-Christ) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering...** (this could correspond to when the beast emerges in the book of revelation).

Rev 13:4-5 **...The beast: and they worshipped the beast...power was given unto him to continue forty and two months** (three and a half years).

What now restrains wickedness and which must be removed before the great tribulation?

2 Thes 2:6-8 **Yet there is something that keeps this from happening now, and you know what it is. At the proper time, then, the Wicked One will appear. The Mysterious Wickedness is already at work, but what is going to happen will not happen until the one who holds it back is taken out of the way. Then the Wicked One will be revealed...** TEV

What is it that now restrains wickedness, that must be taken out of the way before the lawlessness of the great tribulation can take over? It is the true church. Salt is a food preservative. Jesus said the true church is the salt of the earth. The true church by its prayers and its preaching of the gospel is preserving humanity from rapid decay into total wickedness. When the church is removed at the rapture then the onset of lawlessness is immediate. This allows the wicked one, the Antichrist to then be revealed. The restraining one cannot be the Holy Spirit since some will be born of the Spirit during the tribulation.

What other evidence is there that the church will be raptured before the great tribulation?

(1.) God has always spared the righteous from previous judgments: For example in bringing in the flood on the ancient world of the ungodly; God saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness. In turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, He delivered righteous Lot. For the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of

trials and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:5-9).

(2.) Several scriptures indicate that the righteous will escape the great tribulation:

Luke 21:36 (Jesus) **Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things (the calamities of the end of the age) that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.**

1 Thes 5:9 **For God did not appoint us to wrath (that is, His judgments of the earth), but to obtain salvation (from judgment) through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Rev 3:10 **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...**

(3.) The message of the fig tree, the re-forming of Israel, indicates the rapture is near:

Hos 9:10 (God likens Israel to a Fig Tree) **Long ago when I came upon Israel...When I found your ancestors, it was like finding a fig tree bearing fruit for the first time...**

Mark 13:27-29 (Jesus) **He will send His angels, and gather together His elect...from the farthest part of earth (the rapture). Now learn this parable from the fig tree : When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves (when Israel is re-established) you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors!**

Song 2:13 **The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.**

What about those who died before Christ? Christ preached to them, and some heard:

When Jesus died on the Cross He died both physically and spiritually in that, although He Himself was sinless, by bearing and being judged for our sins He was separated from His Father, God. As a result He descended into the lower parts of the earth, that is, into Hell.

Ephesians 4:9 **Now He that ascended (Christ), is it not also He that descended first into the lower parts of the earth?**

Acts 2:27 **Because You will not leave my soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.**

While He was there He preached the gospel to the spirits of the dead, and those who heard and believed the words He preached were made alive, just like we were:

1 Peter 3:18-19 **For Christ...being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,**

1 Peter 4:6 **For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might...live according to God in the spirit.**

John 5:25 (Jesus) **I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead**

will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

John 5:24

...I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

The Bible says that God, through His forbearance, left His people unpunished for their sins committed before Christ died, thereby giving an opportunity for all to become righteous through faith in the blood of Christ, by the hearing and believing of the gospel:

Rom 3:25 **For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath. In this way He was being entirely fair, even though He did not punish those who sinned in former times (but passed over their sins). For He was looking forward to the time when Christ would come and take away those sins.** TLB

The fact that many who died before Christ will be included in the rapture is revealed by the transfiguration of Jesus in Matt. 17:2-3. A B Simpson in his commentary on page 323 Vol. 6, states that: "The transfiguration of Jesus was a preview or a rehearsal of the First Resurrection of those dead and living "in Christ". First it manifested the Lord Himself in His glory, as He shall come on that day. Next the risen dead, in the person of Moses (who died before Christ), to represent the multitude who sleep "in Jesus" (from both covenants) who shall arise in resurrection glory at His coming. Further it revealed the presence of the translated ones, who, without death, shall be caught up to meet Christ in the air, and represented by Elijah (who never did see death but was caught up in the air, by God)".

"All the parties are represented here (Jesus, the righteous dead from all of history, and those currently alive and "in Christ"); Just as they will be (on the day of the rapture)".

Where will people come from that are alive on earth during the 1000 year reign of Christ?

During the awful tribulation most of the world's population is wiped out, but not all. Jesus said unless it was shortened no one would survive, which means some do survive, but if they are in Christ they go in the rapture, so the survivors are still unbelievers, who will give birth and multiply during the millennium. The saints who are ruling with Christ during this time have supernatural bodies that don't marry or give birth but are like angels. This is why at the end of the millennium when Satan is loosed he gathers many unbelievers.

Matt 24:22 (Jesus) **In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, the entire human race will be destroyed...** NLT

Matt 22:30 **For in the resurrection they (the raptured saints) neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.**

Rev 20:7-8 **When the thousand years end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations from every corner of the earth, which are called Gog (anti-Christ) and Magog (anti-Christian people) many millions...** NLT

Who participates in the second resurrection – those not “in Christ” at the first resurrection:

This is after Christ’s 1000 year reign: Rev 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it...And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books...

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire (and the Devil). This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 3:5 (Jesus) **He who overcomes** (the world, his own flesh and the devil) **shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life;**

And after this – a new earth: 2 Peter 3:10-13 ...The elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Nevertheless we...look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

What does it mean to be “in Christ” either at death or living at the time of His appearing?

R A Torrey states on P 128 that to be “In Christ” constitutes readiness for Christ’s return:

1 John 2:28 **And now, little children, abide (live) “in Him”, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.**
NKJV

To be currently “in Christ” and ready for His coming means much more than being born again. Many are born again into Christ but quickly cease living in Him and revert to living in their human nature of flesh. To remain “in Christ” means to stay filled with the Holy Spirit, that is, to have made the choice with our own will to be continually in submission to the Holy Spirit. Obeying Him as He leads us by communicating with our own spirit, daily growing as He feeds us with more of God’s living words. It means for Jesus to be our Lord.

Rom 8:9 (These words are written to Christians) **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if...the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His** (born again, but not in submission).

To be “in Christ” means to be currently the righteousness of God. It means to be actively living in obedience to God. It means to remain in love with Him with all of our hearts:

2 Cor 5:21 **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God “in Him”.**

Heb 5:9 **...(Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,**

Jam 2:5 **...Heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him.**

God’s will and desire and the desire of every true Christian, is for all to be found “in Christ”

1 Thes 2:19 **For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you “in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ (in Christ)” at His coming?**