15 FUTURE EVENTS THAT WILL SHAKE THE WORLD

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With special thanks to
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And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars... for the powers of heaven shall be shaken... and when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

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What can people on earth expect during the last days? In all the chaos that the Bible predicts, several events stand out as truly extraordinary—so much so that they arouse many questions from Christians and non-Christians alike.

What are these events, and what makes them so significant? Jesus warned that a time would come when God would literally shake the world. The heavens and the earth would be shaken. Stunning events in the future would affect life on earth.

In part 1 we’ll look at “Seven Future Events That Will Shake the World.” In part 2 we’ll examine “Five Signs That Reveal the Future.” Then we’ll conclude with part 3, “Three Prophecies That Prove the Bible Is True.” You’ll discover information regarding…

• millions missing in the rapture
• power shifts in the USA and the rest of the world after the rapture
• the rise of a global dictator
• God’s two witnesses rising from the dead in plain view
• the rebuilt Jewish temple usurped by the Antichrist
• the Holocaust eclipsed
• Christ’s glorious return to earth as Conqueror and King
This book will give you a clear overview of world events—how they will unfold, what they mean to us, and God’s purposes for bringing them about in the days ahead.

Bible prophecy is not written to scare us. It is written to prepare us. God’s Word reveals these future events to assure us that He is in control even when the world appears to be out of control. His predictions about the future remind us to keep watching and be ready for the Lord’s return, even as Jesus urged us (Matthew 24:42,44).

Those of us who take the Bible seriously live with an eye on the sky but our feet on the earth. We believe the promise of the imminent return of Christ, but we also clearly understand our God-given responsibility to make a difference in this world to the glory of God. Therefore we keep looking up as we continue marching on.

*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ…*

*Titus 2:13*
Todays world already presents enormous challenges, yet the Bible predicts seven future events that will shake the world beyond anything it has ever known. A coming disappearance of millions of people will change the axis of power across the globe. The United States will diminish as the worlds largest superpower in a single day. A new global leader will announce a plan for world peace.

In the midst of this global upheaval, the world will experience a truly miraculous scenario—the resurrection of two men who had been dead three days. A new Jewish temple will be completed on the Temple Mount, likely in the wake of a destroyed Dome of the Rock. Another Jewish Holocaust—this one greater than that perpetrated by the Nazi regime—will lead to an intense series of judgments until Jesus Himself returns to earth.

The prophet Isaiah foresaw these devastating scenarios.

The floodgates of the heavens are opened,
    the foundations of the earth shake.
The earth is broken up,
    the earth is split asunder,
    the earth is violently shaken.
The earth reels like a drunkard,
    it sways like a hut in the wind;
so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion
    that it falls—never to rise again

(Isaiah 24:18-20 NIV).
Jesus Himself predicted that amazing cosmic events would occur.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars...distress of nations...men’s hearts failing them for fear...for the powers of heaven shall be shaken...and when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:25-28).

What will these earthshaking events be? When will they occur? What can we do to be prepared?
MILLIONS MISSING

The tragic events of 9/11 produced a time of mourning unprecedented in recent American society. Nearly 3000 lives were lost in one day. The Twin Towers—symbols of American economic power—collapsed. The Pentagon sustained significant damage.

News outlets played and replayed the horrific events and eyewitness accounts for weeks. Still today, years removed from 9/11, we remember the lives lost on that fateful day and promise to never forget.

Amazingly, the Bible predicts a tragedy on a much larger scale in the days ahead. Jesus warned that in the future, God will literally shake the heavens and the earth. And one day, millions of people will be missing—unexpectedly, instantly, without warning, and without any signs. The Bible tells us that suddenly the Spirit of God will move, the trumpet will sound, the archangel will shout, and Christ will come and rapture believers home to heaven.

Those of us who are believers look forward to this event as the blessed hope that Jesus is coming again to take us home to the Father’s house. But this will be a terrible time for those who are left behind on the earth. Think of the effect it will have on the economy, the government, the stability of society, and the family members and loved ones who turn around and suddenly realize somebody is not there, with no explanation of where they have gone. The Bible clearly describes this event.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even
as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

When believers die, their bodies go to the grave and their spirits go to heaven. At the time of the rapture, these spirits will return from heaven with Christ. Their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits, and then we will literally be taken, body and spirit, home to the Father’s house. Paul continues describing this amazing event.

This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (verses 15-18).

Here is a message of comfort and encouragement for the believer. Jesus said to the disciples on the last night before He suffered on the cross, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). That is the promise of the rapture, when believers are “caught up,” as the King James Version says. Suddenly we will be snatched away to be with our Savior.

I know that people have a lot of questions about what will happen at the time of the rapture. If we are raptured, what will happen to our clothes? Will we ascend clothes and all? My friend Dr. Tim LaHaye suggests your clothes will be left behind as a testimony to the fact that you have been raptured. There is no clear evidence in the Bible one way or the other, but the question opens the door to
other interesting questions. What about eyeglasses? Contacts? What about false teeth or artificial parts? Some people would have more left behind than taken!

We don’t know some of the details, but the big picture of Bible prophecy is always clear—one day the Lord is coming for His own. That is why Jesus said, “Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come...So you also must be ready” (Matthew 24:42,44 NIV). “It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch” (Mark 13:34 NIV).

This first shocking event that will shake the world in the future is the rapture of the church, when believers are suddenly missing from every nation in the world. The population of the entire planet will be stunned. Yet the Bible tells us those left behind will believe a lie about what has happened. I don’t know what that lie will be—it may have to do with aliens or some other unprovable scenario. Those left behind may promise, “Don’t worry, we’ll find them.” Some kind of explanation will be given. But the truth is, the rapture will change everything.

What Is the Rapture?

We’ve mentioned the rapture, but what does the Bible teach that the rapture is? The Bible clearly teaches that a time is coming when Christ will return for His own. We looked at 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 above. This passage of Scripture mentions five stages to the rapture:

1. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout and with the sound of a trumpet.
2. The dead in Christ will rise first.
3. Then we who are alive and remain on earth will be caught up together with them in the clouds.
4. We will meet the Lord in the air.
5. And we will always be with Him.
The English word rapture comes from the Latin rapto, which is a translation of the Greek New Testament word harpazo. All these terms mean “caught up” or “snatched away.” The word rapture does not appear in English translations, but the concept of the rapture certainly does. The rapture will occur suddenly, instantaneously, and without warning.

The apostle Paul also unveiled what he referred to as a mystery pertaining to the rapture. He explained that some Christians will not sleep, or die. Instead, their bodies will be instantly transformed.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NKJV).

At the moment of the rapture, the bodies of all believers who have died with faith in Christ since the Day of Pentecost will suddenly be transformed into new, living, immortal, resurrected bodies. Even bodies that have long since decayed or have been cremated and scattered across the oceans will be made new. These new bodies will be joined together with the people’s spirits, which Jesus will bring with Him from heaven. Then the bodies of those who are alive on earth and have accepted Christ as their Savior will also be instantly translated into new, immortal bodies.

Notice the similarity of the descriptions of the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 2 Thessalonians 4:15-18. When Christ comes to take His church (all believers) to heaven in fulfillment of His promise in John 14:1-3, He will include both the living and the dead. Together, all believers will be instantaneously transported into heaven to meet their saved loved ones “in the clouds” and then to meet the Lord in the air. Those who have rejected the salvation of
Jesus Christ will remain on earth and witness a miraculous event of astonishing proportions—the sudden mass disappearance of millions upon millions of Christians from the face of the earth.

People often refer to the rapture as the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) because it provides comfort not only to those believers who are concerned about the coming tribulations, but also to those who long to be reunited with their departed loved ones who shared their faith in Christ.

The second coming, which encompasses both the rapture (before the tribulation) and the glorious appearing (at the end of the tribulation), is one of the most significant events mentioned in the entire Bible. It is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament alone refers to this awesome event 321 times—in one out of every thirty verses—making it the second-most prominent doctrine presented in Scripture after the doctrine of salvation. It is mentioned in every chapter of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the first books written for the early church. All nine New Testament authors mention the second coming, and 23 of the 27 New Testament books reference it. God clearly intended His church to be motivated to holiness and world evangelism by the study of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus is coming again, we are called to live for Christ with urgency and to share Him with everyone we can.

**The Phases of the Second Coming**

Much confusion exists among Bible readers regarding the second coming of Christ. Of central importance is whether Jesus will return once or twice. I believe it is better to speak of the two phases of the second coming. There are not two second comings. There are two phases to the second coming—the rapture of the church and the return of Christ with the church.

Remember, there were also multiple events related to the first coming of Christ—His birth, life, ministry, death, burial,
resurrection, and ascension. These were all parts of the first coming of Christ. Further, there are simply too many conflicting elements in the two phases of His second coming to merge them into a single event. In the first phase, Jesus will come suddenly to rapture His church in the air and take all believers to His Father’s house, fulfilling His promise in John 14:1-3. There, they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:9-10) and participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:1-10).

During this time, those left behind on the earth will experience the trials of the horrendous seven-year tribulation. The apostle Paul distinguishes between the two phases of the second coming in Titus 2:13, where he refers to the rapture as the “blessed hope” and the return of Christ to the earth as the “glorious appearing.”

Some theologians attempt to dismiss these multiple phases of Christ’s second coming. They place both the rapture and the glorious appearing at the end of the tribulation, and they hold to what is known as the posttribulation view of the rapture. In this scenario, Christians will be required to face the horrors of the tribulation. However, this view teaches that Christ (the bridegroom) will beat up the church (His bride) in order to get her ready for their heavenly marriage!

In order to hold this view, one must ignore numerous passages of Scripture. A careful study of the many biblical references to the second coming clearly shows that the rapture and the glorious appearing are two separate phases of the second coming. Consider the following differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Rapture of the Church</th>
<th>The Glorious Appearing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Christ comes <em>for</em> believers in the air.</td>
<td>1. Christ comes <em>with</em> believers to the earth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. All Christians on earth are translated into new bodies.</td>
<td>2. There is no translation of bodies.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Christians are taken to the Father’s house in heaven.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>There is no judgment on the earth.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>The church will be taken to heaven.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>It could occur anytime (it is imminent).</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>There are no signs preceding it.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>It affects only believers.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>It is a time of joy.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>It occurs before the “day of wrath.”</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Satan is not bound, but wreaks havoc on the earth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Christians are judged at the judgment seat of Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The marriage of the Lamb takes place.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Only Christ’s own will see Him.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>The seven-year tribulation follows.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Resurrected saints remain on the earth.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Christ judges the inhabitants of the earth.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Christ sets up His kingdom on earth.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>It cannot occur until the end of the seven-year tribulation period.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>There are numerous signs preceding it.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>It affects all humanity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>It is a time of mourning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>It occurs after the “day of wrath.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Satan is bound in the abyss for 1000 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Christians have already been judged at the judgment seat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The marriage of the Lamb has already taken place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>All those on earth will see Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The 1000-year millennium follows.</td>
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When Will the Rapture Occur?

Bible commentators hold various views as to when the rapture will occur (before, during, or after the tribulation), but conservative evangelical commentators agree that there will be a rapture. The only real question is, when will it occur? Christ must return at some point to resurrect the dead in Christ and rapture the living believers in order to take us all to the Father’s house in heaven, as Jesus promised in John 14:1-4. Here are seven reasons to believe the rapture will occur before the tribulation begins.

The Lord Himself promised to deliver us. Revelation 3:10 says, “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, to test those who dwell on the earth” (NKJV). The Greek word ἐκ, which literally means “out of,” is translated in this passage as “from.” In other words, the Lord intends to keep the church out of the tribulation. Therefore, the rapture must occur before the tribulation begins.

The church is to be delivered from the wrath to come. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 that we should “wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (NKJV). This passage is also referring to the rapture. The church must therefore be removed from the earth before the tribulation begins in order to be delivered from the wrath to come.

The church is not appointed to wrath. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:9, “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (NKJV). Once again, the context of these passages is the rapture. The tribulation is prophesied as a time of God’s wrath, and Christians are not appointed to wrath, so it follows that the church must be raptured out of the way before the tribulation begins.

The church is absent in Revelation 4–18. Revelation 4–18 details the events of the tribulation. The church is mentioned 17 times in
the first three chapters of Revelation, but after John (who is a member of the church) is taken up to heaven at the beginning of chapter 4, the church is not mentioned or seen again until chapter 19, when it appears at the marriage with Christ in heaven and then returns to earth with Jesus at His glorious appearing. Why is the church missing from those chapters? The most likely reason is that the church doesn’t go through the tribulation. It will be raptured away before the tribulation begins.

If the church is raptured at the end of the tribulation, there will be no one left to repopulate the earth during the millennium. Just before the millennium begins, all those who have survived the tribulation but still reject Jesus Christ as Savior will be cast into hell (Matthew 25:46). If the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation, as some believe, all Christians would be taken from the earth as well, leaving no one on earth with a natural body to repopulate the planet during the millennium. The problem here is that numerous Old Testament passages, as well as Revelation 20:7-10, note there will be a huge population explosion during the millennium. Where will these people come from? The best answer is that those who miss the rapture and become believers during the tribulation (thanks to the preaching of the 144,000 Jews and the two witnesses) and survive to the end will repopulate the earth. Many believers will be martyred during the tribulation, but some will survive. These people will not be raptured at the end of the tribulation in some sort of posttribulational rapture, but will instead enter Christ’s millennial kingdom with their natural bodies to populate His kingdom. In order for this to be possible, the rapture must take place prior to the tribulation instead of at the end of it.

Only the pretribulational view fulfills Jesus’s simple command to “keep watch” and “be ready” until He comes (Matthew 24:42 NIV). He never told us to watch for the Antichrist, the tribulation, or the final judgment. He clearly told His disciples to watch for Him to return and to be ready for Him to come for them.
The rapture before the tribulation fulfills Jesus’s promise to take the disciples home to the Father’s house in heaven (John 14:2-3). In the upper room, Jesus told His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And 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” (NKJV). Judas had already left the room to betray Jesus. Therefore, he was not a recipient of the rapture promise Jesus affirmed to the 11 believing disciples.

Among the chief features of the rapture is that it will be sudden and will catch people by surprise. “Of that day and hour no one knows” (Matthew 24:36 NKJV), which is why we should live so as to “be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect” (verse 44 NKJV). Only a pretribulation rapture preserves that “any moment” expectation of His coming. Indeed, throughout the ages, the rapture has appeared imminent to Christians of every generation. Nothing could better motivate us to holy living and fervent evangelism than to believe that Jesus could come today. One day He will! The trumpet will sound, the archangel will shout, and we will all go home to be with Jesus.

Raptures in the Bible

God has raptured people to heaven at least three times before.

Enoch. “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). The New Testament adds, “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5 NKJV).

Elijah. “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11 NKJV).

Jesus Christ. After His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven.
When He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11 NKJV).

All three events describe a natural body of flesh being changed and translated into the presence of God. We cannot enter His presence in our finite bodies—a sudden translation is necessary.

The Greek term for the rapture, 
harpazo, is also used in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, which describes Paul being “caught up” into the third heaven, and in Acts 8:39, which says the Spirit of the Lord “caught away” Phillip after he witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch. The same term is used of Christ’s ascension in Revelation 12:5, where the Bible says the “male child” (Jesus) was “snatched up” (harpasthe) to God and his throne. Clearly, the author of Revelation views the ascension as a rapture.

In addition to these, Revelation 11:3-12 also predicts the resurrection and rapture of the two witnesses, who will be martyred during the tribulation. I believe God will use their rapture to assure tribulation saints that the greater rapture had already occurred at the beginning of the tribulation. The rapture of the two witnesses will be a sign of hope to these believers.

The Power of the Rapture

Those in Christ who will be snatched up in the rapture do not have to generate their own power. As in all our dealings with God, He provides the impetus. He has not assigned our resurrection to an angel or any other created being, for “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout.” In other words, He will do the raising. In
John 5:21,28-29, Jesus clearly claimed to possess resurrection power for Himself as proof that He was God in human flesh.

Much is at stake here, including our eternal destiny, so we should notice a most comforting truth. Christ has already demonstrated His power to raise the dead. He did it three times during His brief earthly ministry, the most dramatic of which was when He commanded, “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43). To the astonishment of the people of Bethany, a man dead four days was delivered from his tomb. When that same, experienced voice shouts from heaven at the rapture, all those who are in Christ by faith will respond.

The Lord Jesus Himself declared, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26 NKJV). For almost 2000 years, the spirits of all Christians who have died have immediately gone to heaven to be with Christ. Paul said he would be pleased “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). When Christ comes for His church, He will resurrect the bodies of deceased saints, unite them with their souls and spirits in heaven, and translate all living believers to be with them and Him forever. No wonder the early Christians used to greet each other with Maranatha! (“the Lord is coming”).

Many who do not believe in a pretribulational rapture falsely assume there will be no rapture at all. This is a complete misconception. If people take seriously passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (NASB), they are forced to conclude that there will be a rapture. The only real debate has to do with when it will occur.

Arguments that it is difficult to conceive of millions of people suddenly disappearing are irrelevant. Joking remarks about bumping your head on the ceiling, false teeth being left behind, and hundreds of car accidents suddenly occurring are inconsequential in
light of the fact that Scripture clearly states that we will be “caught up” into the air.

There will be a rapture! The only serious questions are, when will it occur, and what is its relationship to the glorious appearing?

The Time of His Coming

Most evangelicals agree as to the nature of Christ’s coming, but there is substantial disagreement about the timing. Millard Erickson observes, “The one eschatological doctrine on which orthodox theologians most agree is the second coming of Christ. It is indispensable to eschatology. It is the basis of the Christian’s hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God’s plan.”

The New Testament picture of our Lord’s return emphasizes at least six distinct aspects of the time of His coming.


Imminent. The return of Jesus Christ is always described as potentially imminent or “at hand” (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). Every generation of believers is warned to be ready for His coming, as Luke 12:40 states: “You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (NKJV). Believers are constantly urged to look for the coming of the Lord (Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28).

Distant. From God’s perspective, Jesus is coming at any moment. But from the human perspective it has already been nearly 2000 years. Jesus hinted at this in the Olivet Discourse in the illustration of the man who traveled into a far country (heaven) and was gone a long time (Matthew 25:14,19). Peter also implies this in his prediction that men will begin to scoff at the second coming after a long period of time (2 Peter 3:3-9).
Undated. The rapture is the next major event on the prophetic calendar, but it is undated, as is the glorious appearing of Christ. Jesus said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven” (Matthew 24:36). Later He added, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:7 NKJV).

Unexpected. The mass of humanity will not be looking for Christ when He returns (Matthew 24:50). They will be saying “peace and safety” when suddenly caught unprepared by His return. His return will be so unexpected that “as a snare shall it come upon them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35).

Sudden. The Bible warns that Jesus will come “as a thief in the night,” and “sudden destruction” will come upon the unbelieving world (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). His return for the bride will occur in a flash, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye…for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead [believers] shall be raised incorruptible, and we [living believers] shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

The return of Christ is a series of events fulfilling all end-time prophecies. These include predictions of His coming for His church and His coming with His church. No system of biblical prophecy is adequate without a rapture. The church will be “caught up” and gathered together to the Lord. The only real debate is over the question of when. And when the rapture takes place, millions of Christians will disappear in an instant, shaking those left behind and leaving a power vacuum of global proportions that will begin the time of the tribulation.