



“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” Titus 2:13

Calvary Chapel Distinctives: The Rapture of the Church, Part 2

People will often ask, “What’s the difference between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ? Aren’t they the same event?” The Bible actually presents them as two distinct occurrences in history.

One of the main differences is that the Rapture could take place at any time. There are no prophecies yet to be fulfilled before the Rapture occurs. It could happen before you’re through reading this article, and we would be thrilled if it did!

However, there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled before Jesus comes again. The Antichrist must be revealed, and the earth must go through a time of great tribulation and judgment. Jesus spoke about the signs of His coming in Luke 21:28, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Every year just before Halloween, you will see mall employees putting up Christmas decorations, even though it’s still October! When I see this happening, I always get excited because it means Thanksgiving is close. My wife will lovingly point out that the decorations aren’t for Thanksgiving but for Christmas. My response to that is, “I know, but Thanksgiving comes before Christmas. So, if the signs of Christmas are up, Thanksgiving is right around the corner!” In the same way, when we see the signs of the Second Coming, we know the Rapture is getting close!

One day, as Jesus was walking through the temple with His disciples, they remarked on the enormous size of the stones. Jesus said, “There shall not be left here one stone ... that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2b). When they went to the Mount of Olives, they asked Him, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3) Their question was three-fold: what would be the signs of the destruction of the temple, what would be the signs of the end of this current age of human government, and what would be the signs of the coming Kingdom of God. They didn’t ask about, nor did they understand, the concept of the Rapture of the Church.

Jesus then proceeded to answer their questions. When He spoke about the signs of His Second Coming, He naturally spoke about the Great Tribulation. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time ...” (Matthew 24:21). Jesus also warned them, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation ... stand in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15). When you see that abomination standing in the holy place, you will know it’s time for you to get out of Jerusalem and flee to the wilderness. And then, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ... and they shall see the Son

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Jesus then began to tell them a series of parables, the point of each being that they should watch and be ready for His return—the Rapture is imminent; it could happen at any time.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said, “And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ...and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25: 2,10-13). Again, the emphasis is to watch and be ready, for you do not know when the Lord is coming for His servants.

I firmly believe that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation. In reference to it, Jesus said, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass ...” (Luke 21:36). If Jesus is telling me to pray for something, believe me, I will! May we each be praying daily, “Lord, I want to be accounted worthy to escape these things that will come to pass upon the earth.” ☩

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In the next issue, we will continue to discuss the Rapture of the Church by looking at God’s prophetic outline found in the Book of Revelation.