

BIBLE PROPHECY

Who is Taken First?

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Some people wrongly believe that a pre-tribulation Rapture can't happen because Matthew 13:30 says that at the Second Coming the "tares" will be gathered first.

In the parable of the tares Jesus said, "Allow both (wheat and tares) to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "**First** gather up the **tares** and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matt. 13:30). He then explained that the "tares" are "sons of the evil one" (Matt. 13:38).

This parable doesn't mean the Rapture and Second Coming are the same event. Although Jesus specifically forbade the removal of the wicked, He did not forbid the removal of the righteous. (Matt. 13:29)

The harvest is the Second Coming of Christ to earth. Jesus said unbelievers will be gathered **FIRST** at His Second Coming. However, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said the dead in Christ will rise first. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the **dead in Christ will rise first**. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

If the Rapture and Second Coming are the same event, we have a contradiction in the Bible. However, the mystery is cleared up when we understand that the Rapture of the Church precedes the Second Coming.

The Rapture will occur first, when Christ returns in the clouds to remove His church from earth and take us to heaven. Jesus said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am (heaven), there you may be also. (John 14:3). Jesus will not touch the earth at the Rapture but will stay in the heavens. At this time, the dead in Christ will be resurrected, which is immediately followed by living Christians being caught up into heaven.

At the Second Coming, Jesus will return to earth and His feet will land on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4). At this time, He will send out the angels to first gather the tares (unbelievers) and then gather the wheat (those saved after the Rapture).

The wheat and tares are both gathered, but not resurrected. They are still in their natural bodies and this is why the angels must gather them. If the wheat (sons of the kingdom) were resurrected at this time, they wouldn't need the angels to gather them up. These people, who were saved after the Rapture, will enter into Christ's earthly Millennial kingdom and will begin repopulating the earth.

Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16)	Second Coming (Matt. 13:30)
People are resurrected	People are gathered in their natural bodies
The dead in Christ will rise first	Tares (wicked) are gathered first
THEN, those alive in Christ are translated into resurrection bodies (v.17)	THEN wheat (righteous) are gathered, but not resurrected.
Christians are taken to heaven to the place that Jesus prepared in His Father's house (John 14:3)	People who were saved after the Rapture will stay on earth and enter the Millennial kingdom (Zech 14:16)

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Making Life Count Ministries

P.O. Box 680174

Prattville, Alabama 36068

www.makinglifecount.net