

The Secret about the Secret Rapture

Your questions answered concerning the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ...

Question #1 – Won't the second coming of Christ be a secret rapture?

Answer: The secret rapture theory is relatively new to Christianity. However many sincere Christians today believe this popular (but non-Biblical) concept of the second coming. The eight points of the secret rapture theory are as follows (Keep in mind that this is a theory, not based on Bible facts):

1. The rapture is silent.
2. The rapture is invisible.
3. The rapture leaves the wicked alive.
4. God removes the righteous to protect them from the tribulation.
5. Christ's second coming will be in two stages: #1 the secret rapture, and #2 the actual coming which will be glorious.
6. These two stages of the second coming will be seven years apart.
7. The rapture will take place before the revelation of the Antichrist, who then will bring about the tribulation.
8. The wicked will at this point have a second chance to be converted and to serve Christ.

These eight premises have been so widely embraced that most people accept them as fact without pausing to investigate. But our only safety is to search the Scriptures daily to determine whether those things are so (Acts 17:11). A careful study of the scripture reveals just the opposite of what the secret rapture theory teaches! Prepare for some surprises...

1. The rapture is not silent, but rather, is extremely noisy. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Psalms 50:3; Jeremiah 25:30, 31).
2. The rapture is not invisible, but will be seen by all (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27).
3. The rapture does not leave the wicked alive. They are slain by the brightness of the Lord's coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, 2:8)
4. God does not remove the righteous from the tribulation, but rather protects them in it. (Psalm 91:5-12, Acts 14:22, Romans 5:3, 12:12, 2Corinthians 1:4, 7:4, Revelation 1:9, 2:10, 3:10, 7:14).
5. Christ' second coming will not be in two stages--one secret and the other seen by all. There is only one second coming, and it will be seen by every living person on earth. There is no Scripture to support a two-phase second coming.
6. The secret rapture teachers claim there is a seven-year period between the two second comings of Christ. This claim is unscriptural.
7. Antichrist does not appear three and one-half years after the second coming of Jesus. He has been active for centuries (1 John 4:3) and is even now at work!
8. The wicked will not have a second opportunity to be saved after the second coming. All sinners are destroyed at the second coming. There is no second opportunity for anyone to be saved after Christ's return. (Revelation 22:11,12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The secret rapture theory has been based on a system of theology known as dispensationalism, taught in many of the Bible schools that prepare ministers for the pulpits of the world.

The order of events taught by this system is:

1. The secret rapture (resurrection of the righteous, saints being caught up to heaven).
2. The great tribulation
3. The second coming of Christ (really the third) in power in glory.
4. The 1,000 reign of Christ

This order of events is contrary to the order given in the Scriptures.

Here are the records of the Biblical order of events:

Matthew 24

1. The tribulation (verse 29)
2. The darkening of the sun and moon, falling of stars. (verse 29).
3. Glorious coming of Christ in power and majesty (verse 30)
4. Saints caught up to heaven. (verse 31)

Mark 13

1. Tribulation. (verse 24)
2. Darkening of sun and moon, falling of stars. (verses 24-25)
3. Second coming in power and glory. (verse 26)
4. Saints caught up to heaven. (verse 27)

Luke 21

1. Tribulation events. (verses 25-26)
2. Signs in sun, moon, and stars. (verse 25)
3. Second coming in power and glory. (verse 27)

1 Thessalonians 4

1. Second coming in power and glory. (verse 16)
2. Resurrection of righteous. (verse 16)
3. Saints caught up to heaven. (verse 17)

Revelation 6

1. Earthquake, darkening of sun, moon turned to blood, falling of stars. (verse 12-13)
2. Second coming of Jesus in power and glory. (verses 14-17)

Joel 2

1. Darkening of sun and moon. (verse 31)
2. Second coming in power and glory. (verse 32)

Isn't it amazing that there is not one Bible reference that gives the dispensationalist order of events?

Question #2 – Since the Lord is coming “as a thief in the night,” how can anyone know anything about it?

Answer: A thief doesn't also come secretly and silently. But a thief does come unexpectedly. So too, Jesus second coming will be as a “thief in the night” in the sense of suddenly and unexpectedly. But unexpectedly to who? To the wicked who are not watching and waiting for His return! 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 says: “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” Notice, the day of the Lord comes as a thief *TO THE UNPREPARED*, but not to those who are called “brethren”. (See also Matthew 24:43-44)

Question #3 – What about the expression: “One shall be taken, the other shall be left”?

Matthew 24:40-41 is the foundation passage that many use to support the secret rapture/second chance theory. But a careful study of this passage shows how many are taking it out of context and thus coming to unbiblical conclusions. Notice this entire passage in its context:

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Matthew 24:37-41).

Nowhere in this passage does it say that those "taken" are the righteous and that they are taken secretly. Nor does it say that those "left" are the wicked and they will have a second chance. We cannot read the Bible something that is just not there! So what is this verse really saying?

In this passage Jesus is drawing a clear parallel between the second coming and the days of Noah. In order to correctly understand this passage we need to know who are "left" and who are "taken". Most believe that it's the wicked who are "left" and the righteous who are "taken". But according to Matthew 24:38-39, it was the careless and indifferent wicked people who "knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." The wicked were taken and destroyed by the flood. In this context the word "taken" is used in a negative sense and applied to the wicked who were not ready for the flood. In the parallel passage in Luke it says that the wicked were "destroyed" by the flood (Luke 17:27). Thus when comparing the two passages together we see that "taken" means to be "destroyed" or overtaken. In Luke's gospel the disciples ask Jesus "Where Lord?" They wanted to know where are those "taken" taken? Jesus answer is: "And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." (Luke 17:37). The wicked are destroyed or "taken" by the second coming of Christ and then the birds will feast on their dead carcasses (Revelation 19: 17-21). They are not "taken" to heaven. But rather taken off guard by the second coming of Christ and destroyed by it (See 2 Peter 2:12, Revelation 6:14-17, 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

So if those who are "taken" are the wicked that are destroyed, then who are those that are "left"? Well, who was left after the flood? The Bible makes it clear that it was the righteous who were "left" and remained after the flood! Genesis 7:23 says, "And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground... and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." So too, when Jesus comes again it is the righteous that are "left". Not "left" in the sense of being left behind in the world. But "left" in the sense of surviving or enduring! (See also: Isaiah 4:2-3, 24:6) They are the last only standing! They will remain victorious with Jesus! Christ brings them into His eternal kingdom where they will reign with Him forever.

Question #4 – Will there be a second chance for those who are not ready?

Many claim that during the tribulation those not raptured will be given another chance to be saved. But this idea is absent from the scriptures. Notice these clear texts of Scripture:

- **2 Corinthians 6:2** – "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."
- **Revelation 22:11-12** – "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me." (Probation clearly closes just prior to the Second Advent.)
- **Jeremiah 8:20** – "The harvest (day of second coming) is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

When Jesus comes the second time, He carries "in his hand a sharp sickle" (Revelation 14:14). This is the harvest time, and "the harvest is the end of the world" (Matthew 13:39). Jeremiah made it clear that when the harvest is past, people will not be saved. There can be no saving after the reaping of earth's harvest at the coming of Christ. When Jesus and His holy angels appear, then "before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matthew 25:32). There will only be two classes in that great company. The destiny of each has been set by what he did before the coming of Christ.

As we have noticed, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ will come the second time in glorious majesty to take His redeemed home with Him. It will be a personal, visible, and earthshaking event that everyone alive will know about. The righteous will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4: 17), whereas the wicked will be slain by the brightness of that coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Let us carefully study our Bibles that we will not be deceived concerning this most important and wonderful hope, the second coming of Jesus.

Question #5 – Where did the secret rapture theory originate from?

During the Protestant reformation in the 16th century, many were going back to the Bible alone as the sole rule of faith and teaching. The translation of the scriptures into the modern language of the people, coupled with the invention of the printing press, made God's word readily available to many people who were long kept in darkness. As the Bible was studied, many began to see that the visible church held to many unbiblical traditions. As the church strayed away from Bible truth and corruption crept within, many felt they could no longer support the visible church. Many began to leave the mother church and other churches began to be formed. Others looked upon the Roman church as the fulfillment of some of the prophecies of Revelation.

In reaction to this reformation, a council convened in Trent, Italy. It was at the "**Council of Trent**" that the foundation of the secret rapture theory was laid. In this council (lasting from 1545 to 1563) the Roman church devised a way to counter the reformation to stop the mass exodus that was taking place within the church. One of the main agendas in this council was to wipe out what they considered to be the heresy that was causing many to leave. Vatican leaders assigned two Jesuit priests the task of developing counter-interpretations that would turn the focus away from the Catholic Church as being the fulfillment of Revelation's prophecies.

From this council, two man-made systems of prophetic interpretations were invented...

1) **PRETERISM** – Jesuit priest **Alcazar of Seville** invented a system of Biblical interpretation called "*Preterism*". This method applies most of Bible prophecy in past history pointing to Antiochus Epiphanies as the fulfillment of prophecy.

2) **FUTURISM** – Another Jesuit priest, **Francisco Ribera**, invented a system of Biblical interpretation called "*Futurism*". He taught that the antichrist was to be some future superman who would appear near the end of time and continue in power for 3 ½ years.

These two different man-made systems of interpretation brought confusion as to the true meaning of scriptures and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Of the two, futurism took deep root in the Christian world.

It was made popular when another Jesuit priest by the name of **Emmanuel Lacunza** wrote the book, "*The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*" teaching the futurism view of prophecy. Lacunza wrote this book posing as a Jewish Rabbi by the name of Juan Josafa Ben-Ezra so that Protestants would more readily accept it.

Edward Irving then translated this book from Spanish to English. Then **John Nelson Darby** of the Plymouth Brethren Church in England read it. It was Darby that brought this the new doctrine to the United States. During the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century, "*futurism*" received its biggest boost from **Cyrus Schofield**, who incorporated this teaching into the study notes of his **Schofield Reference Bible**, published in 1909.

It was the study notes in the Schofield Bible that were widely accepted among many protestants in the United States that influenced the writings of individuals such as **Hal Lindsey** and **Tim LaHaye**.

Thus we see that the foundation principle of the Left Behind series and the Secret Rapture theory is rooted in a man-made system of Biblical interpretation traced back to the Jesuit order.