

The Second Coming of Christ

WE BELIEVE in the pre-millennial, imminent and personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather His people unto Himself. Having this glorious hope and earnest expectation, we purify ourselves, even as He is pure, so that we may be ready to meet Him when He comes.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; James 5:7-8; Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a constantly repeated message throughout the New Testament. This event is mentioned over 300 times and believers are consistently told to watch and be ready for His coming at least 50 times.

Since the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is the cornerstone of all New Testament prophecy, it is difficult to separate this event from other end-time prophecy. But in today's lesson we will look into the Second Coming of Christ apart from other prophetic events.

1. The Personal Return of Christ

- John 14:3 (NKJV) ³ *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.*
- Acts 1:9–11 (NKJV) ⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ 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."

As the disciples watched Jesus ascend into heaven, two angels appeared and told the men that Christ will return in the same way that He went; literally, physically, and visibly. Therefore we believe in the literal, physical and visible return of Jesus Christ.

2. Two Stages of Christ Return

A close examination of the scriptures pertaining to the Second Coming reveals that there are two parts to Christ's return. Scriptures that refer to the Rapture describe how Jesus will come for His people. Scriptures about His public appearance describe Him coming with them (see Colossians 3:4) and Jude 14) First He will come suddenly, but only as far as the clouds, to rapture the Church. Later He will return to earthy publicly and powerfully, His bride with Him, to begin His Millennium reign (see Lesson 17: The Millennium)

Rapture Scriptures:			
John 14:1-3 Romans 8:23 1 Corinthians 1:7-8 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 Philippians 3:20-21	Colossians 3:4 1 Thessalonians 1:10 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 1 Thessalonians 5:9,23 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2	1 Timothy 6:14-15 2 Timothy 4:1,8 Titus 2:13 Hebrews 9:28 James 5:7-9	1 Peter 1:7,13 1 Peter 5:4 1 John 2:28, 3:2 Revelation 2:25 Revelation 3:10-11

Second Coming Scriptures:			
Daniel 2:44-45 Daniel 7:13-14 Zechariah 14:4-5;9 Matthew 13:41 Matthew 24:27-31	Matthew 26:64 Mark 13:24-27 Mark 14:62 Luke 21:27 Acts 1:9-11	Acts 3:20-21 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:2-3 2 Thessalonians 1:7 2 Thessalonians 2:8 1 Peter 4:13	2 Peter 3:10 Jude 14-15 Revelation 1:7 Revelation 19:11-16 Revelation 22:7,12,20

"The Blessed Hope" (The Rapture)	"The Glorious Appearing" (Public Appearance)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ comes in the air for His bride 2. The rapture of all Christians 3. Christians are taken to the Father's House 4. No judgment on earth at the rapture 5. Church is taken to heaven at the rapture 6. Rapture imminent; could happen at any time 7. No signs for the rapture 8. For believers only 9. Time of joy 10. Before the Great Tribulation 11. No mention of Satan 12. The marriage of the Lamb 13. Only His own see Him 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ comes to earth with His bride 2. No rapture 3. Resurrected saints do not see the Father's house 4. Christ judges inhabitants of earth (Matt 25) 5. Christ sets up His kingdom on earth 6. Occurs after the tribulation 7. Many signs for Christ's physical coming 8. Affects all humanity 9. Time of mourning 10. Immediately after the tribulation (Matt 24:29) 11. Satan bound in the abyss for 1,000 years 12. His bride descends with Him 13. Every eye will see Him

3. The Rapture of the Church

- Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53
- For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The term “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is translated from the Greek word “harpazo” (har-pad-zo) meaning “to seize or catch up/away.” Acts 8:39 uses this same word to describe Philip’s being caught away by the Holy Spirit, thus identifying Who will remove the believers from earth at the rapture.

From scripture we can conclude that the following events will occur simultaneously at the time of the rapture:

- 1) Jesus returns to earth’s atmosphere but only as far as the clouds.
- 2) The dead in Christ will be resurrected to meet Jesus in the air.
- 3) All living Christians will be translated, changed from mortals to immortality, and will be caught up together with those who have just been resurrected from the dead.
- 4) We shall meet the Lord in the air.
- 5) We will be taken to heaven, to the Father’s house.
- 6) We will never again be separated from Christ.

4. The Glorious Appearing (Titus 2:13)

- Matthew 25:29–31 (NKJV) ²⁹ ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.
- Zechariah 14:4 (NKJV) ⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, *Making* a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.
- Zechariah 14:5 (NKJV) ⁵ Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, *And* all the saints with You.

- Revelation 1:7 (NKJV) ⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

From scripture above regarding Christ's return to the earth, we can see how it differs from the events of the rapture:

- 1) Christ will return to the earth with His saints; His feet touch down on the Mount of Olives. (Zachariah 14:4)
 - 2) Unlike the rapture, it will be public and obvious (Revelation 1:7)
 - 3) It will occur immediately after the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:29)
 - 4) His return will cause great mourning in all the nations (Zechariah 12:10-12 and Revelation 1:7)
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5. The Time of Christ's Return

a. No One Knows the Date and Time

- Mark 13:32–33 (NKJV) (Matt. 24:36–51; Luke 21:34–36) ³² “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.
- Matthew 24:44 (NKJV) (See Luke 12:40) ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
- Luke 21:29–31 (NKJV) (Matt. 24:32–35; Mark 13:28–31) ²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

There are people who try to set dates for Christ's return but Jesus said that no one but the Father knows when it will occur. However, Jesus did tell us we can know the general season of His coming by the things that will take place just prior to His return (Matthew 24:3-42; mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-28) Paul also indicated that believers can see the day, approaching, (Hebrews 10:25) as these events increase in frequency and intensity (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3)

b. The Rapture and the Great Tribulation

Romans 5:9 (NKJV) ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV) ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV) (see Luke 21:36) 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, to test those who dwell on the earth.**

There are basically three different positions regarding when the Second Coming will occur:

- 1) Pre-Trib (before the Great Tribulation period)
- 2) Mid-Trib (about halfway through the Great Tribulation) and,
- 3) Post-Trib (at the end of the Great Tribulation)

People who hold to the mid-trib and post-trib views teach that believers will remain on the earth through part or all of the Great Tribulation period. Scriptures tell us few believers will be alive when Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation period. Thus we believe the weight of scripture supports a pre-Great Tribulation rapture for several reasons:

- 1) God's dealing in the Old Testament. God did not flood the earth before Noah and his family were safely in the ark, and He destroyed Sodom after Lot and his family were gone. Further, Jesus recalled these very events in speaking of the signs of the end. (Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-30)

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- 2) The Lord Himself promised to keep us from the Great Tribulation (Revelation 3:10). The word "from" in Revelation 3:10 comes from the Greek word "ek" meaning – out of ". The message of Christ to the church at Philadelphia was also for our present day evangelistic-oriented that will continue to exist up to the time of the rapture.
 - 3) God did not appoint us to wrath (punishment, anger, indignation) (1 Thessalonians 5:9) We know that the Great Tribulation saints will not be delivered: in fact, most will be martyred (Revelation 6:9 and 13:7,15) So, in order to be delivered out of (ek) the tribulation, we conclude that the Church must be removed before the Great Tribulation starts.

Paul was referring to the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 when he wrote, "Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." Later he stated that the Day of the Lord, the glorious appearing, will not occur before the antichrist is revealed, (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

Since the Great Tribulation is especially the time of God's wrath, and since Christians are not appointed to wrath, we believe the Church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation begins.

- 4) The Church is not mentioned in Revelation chapters 4-18. In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, the Church is mentioned 17 times. Then it isn't mentioned or seen again until chapter 19. We believe the Church is not mentioned in the description of the Great Tribulation events because it will not be going through that time of God's wrath. Although God's people may endure severe trials and the church will suffer persecutions before the Lord comes, we believe that the Church will be raptured before the period called the Great Tribulation.
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6. The Imminence of His Coming

- Titus 2:11–13 (NKJV) ¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

“Imminent”: impending, at hand, nearness, immediacy, soon, quickly, before long, at any minute.

All scripture that speaks of the rapture consistently teach that it will happen suddenly and unexpectedly, and that believers should remain in a state of continual readiness (Matthew 24:44; mark 13:33, 36-37; Luke 12:40; Hebrews 10:36-37, James 5:7-9 and Revelation 3:11) Only the pre-tribulation rapture teaching keeps that at-any-moment expectation of His coming alive in our hearts.

Any doctrine about Christ's return, the tribulation, or the millennium that keeps believers from watchfulness, prayerfulness, and moment to moment expectancy is not of God. Nor is a teaching of God if it diminishes our zeal to win the lost for Christ. We are to live hour by hour watching, waiting and working.

CONCLUSION

God has designed Bible prophecy in such a manner that the Rapture has seemed imminent to believers in every generation. Throughout history, whenever the Church has believed our Lord could return at any time, believers have tended to keep their hearts pure (1 Thessalonians 3:13), to live soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12-13), to faithfully assemble together (Hebrews 10:25) and to energetically evangelize the lost. (1 Thessalonians 2:19) Holy living is always a result of an imminent Rapture teaching.

What a blessed hope we have – our Savior is coming back and, in the twinkling of an eye, we will leave this earth and meet our beloved Jesus to be with Him forever. We don't have to live our lives just barely hanging on. Hoping we can endure until Jesus returns. Rather, we are to live our lives as Ambassadors of Christ knowing that we are commissioned to do a wonderful work for Him. He is not returning for a weakened, beaten-up, irrelevant church. He is returning soon for a spotless, victorious, overcoming Church. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)