



The Return of Christ

Christ's Second Coming

TERMS

Three Bible terms applied to Christ's second coming are important in revealing to us the features of Christ's second coming. Because of the nature of the words, each term emphasizes a different aspect of the event.

- 1) **Epiphania** = Manifest, appear, to shine, in spotlight, **glory** (1 Timothy 6:14). This word suggests that Christ will be the center of everyone's attention. All will see Him and know who He is. His return will be no secret.
- 2) **Parousia** = Coming, arrival of a king (coronation), **fanfare** (1 Thessalonians 3:13). This word suggests that there will be much celebration and much honor given Christ at His return.
- 3) **Apokalupsis** = Reveal, uncover, unveil, **sudden and unexpected** (1 Peter 1:13). When Christ comes there will be no warnings. Doubters will be taken by surprise. Those who constantly seek for signs and attempt to pinpoint the time of Christ's return will not succeed. Only the Father knows when Christ will come again. (Matthew 24: 36)

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN CHRIST COMES

EVENT #1 → The Lord will descend with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the sound of the trump of God. Angels will be present and so will fire. Evil people will suffer the wrath of the Lord and good people will rejoice in the Lord's coming.

1Thessalonians 4:16

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God."

1Corinthians 15:51-52

"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."

2Thessalonians 1:7-8

"you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

EVENT #2 → The saints will accompany Christ from heaven.

1Thessalonians 3:13

"So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

1Thessalonians 4:14

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."

In order to comprehend this event, we must understand what happens to a Christian when he dies. At death his spirit is separated from his body. The body goes into the grave, but the spirit goes to be with Christ. It is this spirit that will return with Jesus at the second coming of Christ. Consider the following passages.

- 1) James 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
- 2) Luke 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last."
- 3) Philippians 1:23 "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better..."
- 4) 1Corinthians 15:42-44 "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

EVENT #3 →

1Thessalonians 4:16 The dead shall rise first.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

In this statement Paul reveals that bodies which are in the graves will be resurrected at this time. We cannot tell from this passage if Paul means just Christians, or unbelievers as well. For this information we must go to **John 5:28-29**

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."

The purpose of the resurrection of all bodies in the grave is their union with their departed spirits. As we have seen from 1Corinthians 15:42-44, the body that went into the grave was a corruptible one, but the one that will come forth is incorruptible. This new body will be appropriate to house our eternal spirit. The union of body and spirit is suggested by Revelation 20:13-14 which states that death and Hades will no longer exist. Since death is the separation of body and spirit, it stands to reason that reuniting all spirits with a new body will do away with death as Revelation 20:13-14 reveals.

Revelation 20:13-14 "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

EVENT #4 → The living will be changed.

1Corinthians 15:51

"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." (See also Corinthians 5:1-8)

Just as those who have died prior to the second coming of Christ will be given new bodies to house their eternal spirit, so those who are still alive when Jesus comes will receive a new body. Their current body will undergo a change so that it is no longer subject to sickness, pain and death. It will be incorruptible.

EVENT #5 → The saints will be caught up with Christ.

1Thessalonians 4:17

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

We will not stay on earth to set up some kind of earthly kingdom as some teach, but we will go to be with Jesus. But before we begin eternity in heaven with Him, the next event must take place.

EVENT #6 → After death will come the judgment of all people.

Hebrews 9:27

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (See also Matthew 25:1-13, 31-32 and Revelation 20:12)

While many popular doctrines teach that there will be various events **between** Christ's second coming and the judgment, these passages leave one with the impression that we go directly with Christ to the judgment when He returns.

EVENT #7 → Heaven and earth will burn and a new existence will begin.

2 Peter 3:10

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Revelation 20:11

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them."

This may mean that the physical realm as we know it will be destroyed and all that is left is heaven and hell. However, see below under 2Peter 3:13. Whatever will replace the present existence, it is certain that the present world is slated for destruction soon after Christ returns.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU AND ME?

1Thessalonians 5:3-9

"For when they say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"

2Peter 3:11-13

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless"

What the "new heavens" and "new earth" will be like is not specified. These terms may well be a figurative way of saying that the old system of things will be removed in favor of a new existence in heaven. Perhaps our eternal existence will be more physical than some imagine. We simply are not told every detail. Most of our evidence comes from Revelation 21-22, the Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 and from individual comments such as Christ's promise of mansions for the apostles in John 14:2.

The passages under this heading tell us one very important principle. Even if we do not know all the facts about the afterlife, we must all face it and all of us who are wise will be ready. Remember Christ's parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The last verse of the parable gives the warning, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." Consider also 1Thessalonians 5:3-9.

It is not the man who knows most about the events of the second coming who will be the most blessed when the time comes. It is the man who is ready because he has come to Jesus for the cleansing of his sins and because he has lived a life dedicated in service to Christ and His church.