

Introduction to the Coming of the Lord

Introduction

Almost all that I have read concerning the times of the end or the last days concentrates on the Antichrist and the Tribulation period. However, that is only a small part of the close of this age and not the part that we should be concentrating on particularly. We should be focusing on the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and the completing or the consummation of God's purposes. This series of lessons will look at God's plan and how He completes it according to His will so that the mystery of His purpose is demonstrated to all who are in the Heavens and the earth. It is important that we begin to gain understanding of the times so that we can be prepared for what God is doing.

Like a Thief?

I have heard many comments about the idea that Jesus is coming like a thief, no will know when so it doesn't matter if we understand it or not. His return will happen secretly and by surprise like a thief. He will sneak in and take what is His and sneak out again. However, is that what the Scriptures say? Not even remotely.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 NKJV (1) But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. (2) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (3) 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. (4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (5) You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. (6) Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober.

The Lord comes as a thief from the world's viewpoint. They are continuing with business as usual when the Day comes. However, verse 4 says that this is not true of us because we are not in darkness. To the believers, Jesus is NOT coming as a thief but will be expected by those who watch and are sober minded.

Matthew 24:38-39 NKJV For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, (39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Jesus said that His coming would be like the days before the flood. The world continued with business

as usual without any regard for the testimony of Noah. They did not know that judgment was upon them until the flood came and took them away. However, Noah knew seven days before the flood came (Genesis 7:4).

Jesus told the Church in Sardis, which is one of the seven Churches in Revelation, that if they did not watch, He would come as a thief. This implies that if they did watch His return would be expected.

Revelation 3:3 NKJV Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Peter mentions Jesus coming as a thief also, but without the “sneakiness” that would be associated with a thief.

2 Peter 3:10 NKJV 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.

Based on Peter's words, the Day of the Lord will not be a “sneak in and sneak out” coming but a rather noisy display of power. These Scriptures seem to be very clear and straightforward. Is it possible that maybe we have been misled by our traditions?

The Appearing of Jesus

The hope of all believers is centered around the coming, the appearing of the Lord Jesus. The New Testament Greek word that is used for this is “*parousia*” and means “*being alongside of, being present*”. The King James Bible always translates “*parousia*” as “*coming*” when making reference to the return of the Lord. Each time it appears in the Greek New Testament the definite article appears with it, making it ***the parousía***. This lends emphasis to the idea that there will be one grand ***parousía*** of the Lord Jesus Christ—***the coming***.

Many have made the coming, the parousia, of Jesus to be a two or even a three step event instead of the one coming that the Scriptures present. They have done this in order to try to validate their own pet theories, ideas, or traditions about the return of the Lord. Most of this is centered around the idea that Christians should avoid the Tribulation Period, so elaborate “rapture” scenarios are developed to “prove” what they want to believe.

We need to set all of this aside and simply look at what the Scriptures say without trying to twist them into something that they don't say. We need to heed Jesus' warning to His disciples. Every time that He discussed the close of the age and His return, He began with a warning to not be deceived. It would seem that deception about the end days and His return will increase as the time approaches.

Secret or Open Coming?

When Jesus ascended into Heaven after spending forty days speaking with His disciples concerning the Kingdom of God as described in the first chapter of Acts, angels spoke to them concerning the return of the Lord.

Acts 1:10-11 NKJV 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."

So, we have in this the testimony of the Angels that Jesus will return in the same manner that they saw Him go. He went by leaving the earth and ascending into Heaven. His coming in like manner means that He will leave Heaven and descend to the earth.

Jesus, Himself, also spoke clearly about His return.

Matthew 24:27 NKJV For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

This is a very descriptive picture—lightning flashing across the sky from the east to the west. Jesus said His return would be like that. There is nothing “secret” about this. As a matter of fact, in the verses immediately preceding this one, Jesus warns them not to believe anyone that tries to tell them that He is in the desert or in the hidden rooms. So, Jesus was saying that His return would not be a private thing to a few in the desert or in the hidden room but would be open and visible to all just like lightning.

The other aspect of this is that “the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west”. If you continue west long enough you come to the east, that is, you circle the globe. I think that is also a part of Jesus' return because Revelation says:

Revelation 1:7 NKJV 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.

Like lightning from east to west He circles the globe and every eye is able to see Him. This is certainly not a secret or hidden appearing but a glorious open manifestation of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

To get a complete picture of the Lord's return we need to add some more verses to our current list. When Jesus returns, He is not coming like the meek Lamb He was the first time. He is coming as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Warrior King who sits on the Throne of David, the Commander-in-chief of the armies of Heaven.

Revelation 19:11-16 NKJV (11) Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (12) His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. (13) He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. (14) And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. (15) Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (16) And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

With that picture of His Majesty in mind, this is what happens as He descends from Heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NKJV (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— (52) 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.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 NKJV (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. (16) 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. (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.

This is a noisy event. Along with the armies of Heaven, including those who are dead in Him, there is the shout of the Lord, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. The shout of the Lord is loud enough to raise the dead, because the dead in Christ rise first, then those who are alive and remain (literally, those who have survived) are caught up with the dead to meet the Lord in the air.

NOTE: [There are some who want to say that meeting the Lord in the air means that He doesn't come to earth but returns to Heaven with us. However, the "meeting" is that of a King coming to a city where the inhabitants who are happy to receive him run to meet him on the way and escort him into the city. *To meet* is an English infinitive. As such, it expresses purpose, thus saying, "The purpose of our being caught up together is to *meet* the Lord." The Greek, however, does not use an infinitive at this point. It uses the preposition "*eis*" meaning "unto" with a noun "*apántesin*" meaning "an encounter." This generally indicates a meeting with someone after which the company proceeds on the way with the one whom they meet. In this case, the meeting is with Jesus to proceed on with Him to His destination. He is not on His way to heaven, but rather on His way to the earth. This is clearly the meaning in the only other two passages where the term "*eis apántesin*" is used. In **Matthew 25:6**, the *virgins* go out *to meet* the bridegroom to accompany him back to the wedding. In **Acts 28:15**, the *brethren* go out along the way *to*

meet Paul and proceed on the way with him. “*Eis apántesin*” can also imply a military encounter. The context of the preceding verse seems to demand this. We will meet Jesus to proceed on the way with Him to a battle encounter *in the air*. He must break the force of *the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).*]

Putting all of these Scriptures together, we have the Lord returning from Heaven to the earth moving from east to west leading the armies of Heaven with the dead rising to meet Him in the air along with the living believers who are being changed into resurrection bodies as the Lord encircles the globe while every eye sees Him in His Majesty until His foot comes down in Jerusalem.

With that picture of the Lord's triumphal return there is certainly nothing “secret” about it. It is not a “sneak attack” but an open display of His majestic glory.

Recap of the Events of His Coming

1. Jesus leaves Heaven coming to earth leading the armies of Heaven. (Revelation 19:11-16)
2. Jesus breaks the power of the prince of the air, laying waste to principalities and powers as He in military array enters our domain. (Ephesians 2:2; 6:12)
3. The dead in Christ rise in their resurrection bodies. (I Thessalonians 4:16)
4. The believers who are alive are changed into their resurrection bodies. (I Corinthians 15:51-52)
5. Every eye sees Him as He flashes like lightning from east to west. (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27)
6. The Lord destroys the army of the beast. (Revelation 19:18-21)
7. The beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire. (Revelation 19: 20)