

“He is Coming with the Clouds, and Every Eye Will See Him”

Is There One, Two, Three, or Even Four Comings of Jesus?

Texts: Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:29-31¹

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“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen” (Rev 1:7).

I. Introduction

A. Most popular evangelical belief about Second Coming:

- a secret “Rapture” coming (Second); resurrection of believers; seven-year tribulation; another “coming” (Third); millennial paradise; Gog-Magog rebellion; resurrection and judgment of unbelievers (Fourth).
- This scheme was never taught in the first 1,800 of church history, until John Darby ca. 1830.

B. From the 4th century, Augustine taught a very simple “last things”:

- Second Coming will be one big event in a short period of time: return of Christ; one resurrection and judgment of both believers and unbelievers;
- “thousand years”: represents a long period of time between Christ's first and comings. See Deut 7:9; Psa 50:10; 2 Peter 3:8.
- Revelation and other apocalyptic books mostly symbolic; Revelation interprets Old Testament apocalyptic books such as Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel.

II. “Coming with the clouds”

A. **At the ascension**, *“a cloud took him out of their sight... will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:9, 11). See also Dan 7:13 (ascension and SC); Luke 9:34 (transfiguration); Isa 19:1 (the LORD rides a “swift cloud” in judgment).

B. **At the Second Coming (SC)**, *“coming on the clouds of heaven.”* Note *“immediately after the tribulation of those days”*; cosmic powers shaken; *“with power and great glory”* (Matt 24:29-31). See also Matt 26:64.

III. “Every eye will see him”

A. Far from being “secret,” the Rapture is loud and visible to all.

- 1 Thess 4:16: *“with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.”*
- *the voice of an archangel*: The voice of the LORD is thunderous in judgment (Exod 19:16; Psa 18:13; 29:3-9; Isa 30:30-31).
- *the trumpet of God*: announced the Lord's presence (Exod 19:16; 1 Chr 16:6; Psa 47:5; Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14); associated with battle, the day of the Lord, and the resurrection (1 Cor 15:52). The 7th and last trumpet announced the coming of the eternal kingdom and Judgment Day (Rev 11:15-19). See also Matt 24:31's *“power and great glory”* and *“loud trumpet.”*

¹ This lecture was presented by Rev. Nollie Malabuyo on January 24, 2015 at the Joint Retreat of Trinity Covenant Reformed Church (Imus, Cavite) and Pasig Covenant Reformed Church (Pasig) at Nature Discovery Camp in Tagaytay City, Philippines.

B. *Because all will be resurrected, all people on earth will see and hear his coming*

- Not only believers, but unbelievers as well, are resurrected at the SC.
 - Two events at the SC: (1) Christ will “*be marveled at among all who have believed*”; (2) He will “*[inflict] vengeance*” on the wicked. One Judgment Day at the SC (2 Thess 1:5-10).
 - Other clear passages about a general resurrection of both believers and unbelievers: Dan 12:2-3; Parables of the Wheat and Weeds, Dragnet (Matt 13); Parables of the Ten Virgins, Talents, and Sheep and Goats (Matt 25); John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15.

IV. “All tribes of the earth will wail on account of him”

At the Second Coming, all the earth will mourn because he comes to judge them.

- In terror, unbelievers will call to the mountains, “*Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*” (Rev 6:16).
- Revelation 11:12-13: Because of persecution against Christians, the church will look as if dead. So the unbelieving world will rejoice. But the Church is resurrected and ascends “*to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them... and [they] were terrified.*” Also, a “great earthquake” kills many.
- When the world realizes that they have crucified Christ, they will mourn and weep bitterly over him (Zech 12:10; Jer 50:4; John 19:37).

V. Exegesis of Words Used for the Second Coming

- A. ***apokalypsis***: “an unveiling” or “revelation”; the removal of those things which presently obstruct our vision of Christ; 1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13. In 1 Cor 1:7, this is supposed to refer to the Rapture. But in 2 Thess 1:7-8, this is supposed to be the “real” Second Coming 7 years later.
- B. ***epiphaneia***: an “appearance” or “manifestation”; Christ’s “coming forth out of a hidden background with the rich blessings of salvation; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Tit 2:13. In 1 Tim 6:13-14, supposed to be the “Rapture.” But in 2 Thess 2:8, supposed to be 7 years later.
- C. ***parousia***: “presence”; the coming of Christ results in his presence; Matt 24:3, 27, 37; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 5:23; Jas 5:7-8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12. In 1 Thess 4:15, used in the “Rapture” passage. In 1 Thess 3:13, used to describe his coming “with all his holy ones,” which is supposed to be 7 years later. In 2 Thess 2:8, used to Christ’s coming when he “*will kill [the Antichrist] with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.*” This is not supposed to happen until 7 years after Rapture.

VI. Conclusion

“This means that there is no basis whatever for this kind of distinction pretribulationists make between two phases of Christ’s return. The dispensational theory of the secret rapture cannot be justified from the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that though there are different aspects involved, they are all part of one event—the blessed hope—when Jesus Christ will come again on the last day to judge the world, raise the dead, and make all things new.” ~ Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 144.