

Week 4 - The Second Advent: Prophecy and Anticipation

Overview: This lesson explores the Second Advent of Jesus Christ—His literal, physical return to Earth in power and majesty. Unlike the first coming as a humble Savior, the Second Advent focuses on the consummation of all things: the manifestation of His divine glory, the administration of final judgment, and the completion of eternal salvation for His people. Believers are called to live in active watchfulness, anchoring their hope in the restoration of all things and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.

Theme: The future hope of Jesus' return serves as a call to live in joyful and reverent anticipation of the Second Advent that will reveal His full glory to reign forever.

Objectives::

- **Understand** the distinction between the rapture (Christ for His own) and the Second Advent (Christ with His own to Earth).
- **Articulate** the biblical certainty of the personal, physical, and visible return of Jesus Christ.
- **Understand** the dual themes of the Second Advent: final judgment for the unrepentant and ultimate salvation/glorification for believers.
- **Identify** key scriptural passages relating to Christ's return.
- **Encourage & Apply** the "blessed hope" of Christ's return as a practical motivation for holy living, watchfulness, and faithful service in the present day.

Key Scriptures:

- **Job 19:25-27** (OT expectation of the Redeemer standing on the earth)
- **Isaiah 11:4:** "He shall judge the poor with justice... and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked."
- **Daniel 7:13-14** (Vision of the Son of Man receiving everlasting dominion and a kingdom)
- **Zechariah 14:4** (Lord standing on the Mount of Olives)
- **Matthew 3:12:** "His winnowing fan is in his hand... he will gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn."
- **Matthew 24:27-31** (Visible and universal coming with power and great glory)
- **Acts 1:9-11** (Jesus will return in the same way He ascended)
- **2 Thessalonians 1:7-10** (Jesus revealed from heaven in fire and glorified in His followers)
- **2 Timothy 4:1:** "Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead."
- **Revelation 1:7** (Every eye will see Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail)
- **Revelation 19:11-16** (Christ returning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to judge and make war)

Study Points

- **Point 1** - The Distinction: Rapture vs. Second Advent
- **Point 2** - The Manner and Visibility of the Advent
- **Point 3** - Themes Associated with the Second Advent
- **Point 4** - The Call to Anticipation and Preparation for the Rapture of His Saints

Point 1 - The Distinction: Rapture vs. Second Advent

An examination of the theological distinction between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Advent (or Second Coming) of Christ is extremely relevant. While both events involve a return of Jesus, they differ significantly in their timing, manner, purpose, and impact on the world.

The Rapture is presented as a sudden, secret event where Christ meets believers in the air to take them to heaven, while the Second Advent is described as a public, global, and visible return to Earth to establish His kingdom and execute judgment. Understanding these two distinct events helps clarify biblical prophecy regarding the end times.

➤ **1st Event - The Rapture: Christ Comes for a Private Reunion with His Church** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

The Rapture is the event where Jesus Christ secretly and instantly removes all living believers (the Church) from the earth, along with all deceased believers whose bodies are resurrected and reunited with their souls.

The Sequence (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18):

- It begins with a "shout of command, with the archangel's call and with the trump of God" (v. 16).
- The "dead in Christ will rise first" (v. 16).
- Then, living believers "will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (v. 17). The Greek word for "caught up" is *harpazō*, which means to seize or snatch away suddenly, forming the basis for the term "rapture" (from the Latin *raptura*).
- The location of this meeting is "in the air," not on the earth.
- The purpose is that believers "will always be with the Lord" (v. 17), removing the Church before a period of global tribulation.
- Paul concludes with the command to "comfort one another with these words" (v. 18), indicating it is a message of hope and encouragement.
- 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 adds details about the transformation of the body:
- This happens in an instant: "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (v. 52).
- Mortal bodies are instantaneously transformed into "imperishable" and "immortal" bodies, perfectly suited for eternity with Christ (v. 53-54).
- This is the ultimate victory over death ("Death is swallowed up in victory" v. 54).
- The world continues on after the Rapture, but without the Church and the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit (as suggested in 2 Thessalonians 2:7). This absence sets the stage for the events of the Tribulation period.

➤ **2nd Event - The Second Advent: The Public Revelation of Christ Coming with His Saints** (Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:11, Revelation 1:7, and Revelation 19:11-21)

The Second Advent occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation period, interpreted from Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) as seven years after the Rapture of the church has occurred. At this event, Christ returns publicly and physically to the earth to judge the nations, defeat His enemies, and establish His millennial kingdom.

- **Matthew 24:30 emphasizes the visibility and public nature of the return:**
 "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."
 Unlike the private rapture, this is a globally recognized, unmistakable event.
- **Acts 1:11 offers a promise from the angels after Jesus' ascension:**
 "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."
 He physically departed the Mount of Olives and will physically return to it (Zechariah 14:4).
- **Revelation 1:7 reiterates the universal visibility:**
 "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him."
- **Revelation 19:11-21 provides a vivid, climactic account of Christ's return in judgment:**
 - Christ appears as a conquering King, "Faithful and True," riding a white horse (v. 11).
 - He is followed by "the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (v. 14)—these are the saints (the Church and Old Testament believers) who return *with* Him.
 - He "judges and wages war" (v. 11) and "treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty" (v. 15).
 - This event culminates in the defeat of the Antichrist and the false prophet, who are cast into the lake of fire (v. 20), immediately preceding the establishment of His earthly reign.
 - Christ establishes His kingdom.

Discussion Questions

- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. How does this passage describe the nature of the Rapture and what comfort should believers draw from these verses?
- Read Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7. How do these descriptions of the Second Advent contrast with the description of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians?
- Why is the distinction between Christ coming *in the air* for His church (Rapture) and Christ coming *to the earth* with His saints (Second Advent) theologically significant?
- How should the imminent hope of the Rapture affect our daily lives, priorities, and evangelism efforts?
- What difference does it make in your understanding of end-times prophecy to know that these are two separate events rather than one single event?

Point 2 - The Manner and Visibility of the Advent

Our second point explores the biblical descriptions of Jesus Christ's Second Advent, focusing on its sudden, unmistakable, and universally visible nature. The combination of elements paints a picture of a spectacular, undeniable, and loud entrance by the King of Kings. The return will be anything but silent. It is characterized by three distinct sounds: a shout of command, the archangel's voice, and the trumpet of God. Christ arrives in "great power and glory," accompanied by millions of angels and His holy ones (the saints), signaling the final gathering of His elect and the establishment of His kingdom and millennial reign.

➤ **Sudden and Unmistakable: As Clear as Lightning**

- The return will be as clear and visible as lightning flashing across the sky (Matthew 24:27).
- Jesus uses a powerful natural metaphor to describe the visibility of His return. Lightning is instantaneous, bright, and impossible to ignore. When lightning flashes across the sky, no one needs to announce its presence; everyone who is watching the sky sees it.
- This passage directly addresses potential deceptions. Jesus warns against those who might claim He is in a secret room or a deserted place (Matthew 24:23-26). His actual coming will be just as obvious, immediate, and universally recognizable as a lightning strike across the horizon. It will be a global event, seen by all simultaneously.
- Just as lightning instantly illuminates the entire sky, Christ's return will be immediate and impossible to ignore. This serves as a warning against "secret" messiahs or local appearances; if the event is not globally self-evident, it is not the true return of Christ. It will be a "jaw-dropping" entrance that consumes the darkness of the world.

➤ **Universal Witness: "Every Eye Will See Him"**

- "Every eye will see him" - Revelation 1:7. It is not a secret event.
- This passage in the Book of Revelation confirms the absolute universality of Christ's visible return. The language is unequivocal: "every eye will see him." This is not a local or regional event, nor is it a spiritual or metaphorical appearance that only believers will perceive.
- The visibility extends even to those who historically "pierced him" (both the Roman soldiers who crucified Him and, symbolically, all who reject Him). The response of "all tribes of the earth" is one of wailing, indicating a moment of judgment and recognition for those who were unprepared or hostile to His arrival. This scripture reinforces that the Advent is a undeniable public display for all humanity.
- This return is not a private meeting but a public revelation to all of humanity. Unlike His first coming as a humble baby in a remote town, this advent will be witnessed by every person on earth simultaneously. It marks the moment when all nations will mourn and recognize the true King.

➤ **Audible and Glorious: With Trumpet Call and Angels**

- He will descend with a loud command, a trumpet call, and in the glory of the Father with His angels (Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- The return of Christ will engage all the senses, not just sight. These verses add an audible, official, and glorious dimension to the event.
 - **Glory and Authority (Matthew 16:27):** He returns not as the humble servant as in His First Advent, but in the full "glory of his Father," accompanied by a celestial host (angels). This is a royal procession of divine power, where He assumes His role as final Judge and King.
 - **A Sound that Cannot Be Missed (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 24:31):** The descriptions include a "cry of command," the "voice of an archangel," and the "loud trumpet call of God." The trumpet in biblical contexts often signifies a gathering, a warning, or the start of a great divine action (e.g., judgment or coronation). The sound will be inescapable and signal the immediate resurrection of the faithful and the gathering of the elect.

Discussion Questions

- **Known vs. Unknown:** Since the return of Christ for His saints (the rapture of the Church) will be sudden and at an hour we do not expect (Matthew 24:44), how should our daily behavior change to reflect constant readiness as we look forward to the prophecy of the Second Advent when the Kingdom of Christ will be established?

- **Instantaneous occurrence vs. Triumphal ceremony:** Why is it important for believers to understand that Christ's Second Advent is a "universal witness" rather than a secret event as in the Rapture? How does this protect us from false teachings?

Characteristics of False Teachings/Teachers

- **Deception & Miracles:** Performing great signs/wonders to lead even the "elect" astray (Matthew 24:24), mimicking true power to deceive (2 Thess 2:9).
- **Denial of Christ:** Denying Jesus bought them, denying His return, or claiming to be Christ (2 Peter 2:1, 2:10; Matthew 24:5).
- **Greed & Immorality:** Motivated by money, promising fulfillment but delivering nothing, leading licentious lives (2 Peter 2:3, 14).
- **Secret Infiltration:** Sneaking in destructive heresies and corrupting the church from within (2 Peter 2:1).
- **Demonic Origins:** Following deceptive spirits and doctrines from demons (1 Timothy 4:1).
- **Perversion of Scripture:** Twisting God's Word for personal gain, promoting self-centered "faith," or advocating unscriptural practices (like forbidding marriage/food) (1 Timothy 4:3, 5; 2 Peter 2:2).
- **The Role of the Saints:** According to 1 Thessalonians 4:14–17 and Jude 1:14, Christ returns *with* His holy ones. What does it mean to you that believers will participate in this glorious and visible advent?
- **Responding to the Glory:** Revelation 1:7 says that "all peoples on earth will mourn because of him." Why would a glorious event cause mourning for some and joy for others?

Point 3 - Themes Associated with the Second Advent

Now we will explore the major biblical themes surrounding the Second Advent of Jesus Christ: Judgment, Salvation and Deliverance, and the Manifest Glory and Kingdom.

The Second Advent is a pivotal event in Christian theology, marking the culmination of God's redemptive plan, the administration of final justice, and the establishment of Christ's everlasting reign on Earth.

- **Theme 1: The Scope of Judgment:** The advent marks the "day of the Lord's anger" for the wicked (Zephaniah 2:3). He will judge the nations and repay every person according to their deeds (Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31-33; Jude 14-15). The Antichrist and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

The theme of judgment underscores God's moral governance of the universe. It serves as a stark reminder that evil and injustice "will not" ultimately prevail. The judgment at the Second Advent is decisive and final. It brings closure to human history as we know it, ensuring that every sin is punished and every wrong is made right.

- **Theme 2: Salvation and Deliverance-The Defeat of Evil:** For believers, it is a time of ultimate redemption, when mortality puts on immortality and they receive their glorified bodies (Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:53).
 - **Glorification:** At His coming, the mortal "puts on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). This is the "redemption of our bodies" for which all creation groans (Romans 8:23).
 - **Ultimate Rescue:** Hebrews 9:28 notes that Christ will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

The Second Advent is the glorious culmination of the salvation narrative. Believers are not only saved from sin's penalty (justification) and power (sanctification), but ultimately from sin's presence and the limitations of their earthly bodies (glorification).

- **Theme 3: Manifest Glory and Kingdom:** The return of Jesus Christ signifies the physical establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth. Christ will assume His rightful place as King, fulfilling ancient prophecies given to Israel regarding a reign of justice, peace, and universal glory for a thousand years (the Millennium), fulfilling prophecies given to Israel (Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 11:1-10; Revelation 20:4-6). The earth will be transformed, and God's glory will be universally revealed (Isaiah 40:5; Romans 8:19-21). The Second Advent is the literal fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant—Christ reigning as King on the throne of David.
- **The Millennium:** Revelation 20:4-6 describes a thousand-year reign where Christ and His saints rule the earth. This period fulfills the prophecy of a government of peace and justice (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- **Restoration of Creation:** The earth itself is transformed. The curse of Genesis is lifted, and the "glory of the Lord shall be revealed" for all flesh to see (Isaiah 40:5; Romans 8:19-21).

The Kingdom theme speaks to God's ultimate sovereignty over creation. History is moving toward a literal, physical fulfillment of God's promises, not just a spiritual reality. When Christ returns, the world's current systems of governance will be replaced by His perfect rule. The glory of God, once confined to a temple or glimpses of divine presence, will be universally revealed and acknowledged by all flesh. This provides a vision of perfect peace and justice that is a future hope for both humanity and the natural world.

Discussion Questions

- **Regarding Judgment:** How does the reality of Christ as the final Judge change the way we view current world injustices or personal grievances?
- **Regarding Salvation:** Romans 8:23 speaks of "groaning" for the redemption of our bodies. In what ways do we experience this longing today, and how does the promise of a glorified body provide comfort?
- **Regarding the Kingdom:** Isaiah 11 describes a world where "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb." How does the promise of a literal, peaceful kingdom on earth differ from a vague "heavenly" existence?
- **Application:** If the Second Advent marks the end of the opportunity for repentance, how should this influence our urgency in evangelism and our daily walk (Jude 14-15)?

Point 4 - The Call to Anticipation and Preparation for the Rapture of His Saints

There is a biblical mandate for Christians to actively anticipate and prepare for the Jesus Christ's Rapture of His Saints. Far from being a source of fear or speculation, this "blessed hope" serves as a powerful motivator for spiritual alertness, holy living, and mutual encouragement within the body of Christ.

Drawing from key New Testament scriptures, it emphasizes three core aspects of this calling: maintaining watchfulness and readiness due to the uncertainty of the timing, translating hope into godly living in the present age, and finding encouragement and comfort in the promise of His return.

- **Watchfulness and Readiness:** Because no one knows the day or hour, believers are exhorted to stay awake, be alert, and be ready (Matthew 24:36, 42-44; Luke 21:34-36).
 - Jesus explicitly states the timing of His return is a mystery known only to the Father. This eliminates date-setting and places the focus squarely on our present response.
 - The repeated command is to "keep watch" or "be always on the watch." This isn't just a physical state of wakefulness, but a spiritual alertness. It means living each day as if it could be the day of His return.
 - Luke's account warns against the dangers that hinder watchfulness: worldly anxieties, carousing, and drunkenness. These things "weigh down" the heart, making one spiritually sluggish and unprepared. A watchful believer actively manages their life to avoid spiritual distractions.

- **Godly Living in this Present Age:** The "blessed hope" should motivate Christians to live "sensible, righteous, and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11-13; 2 Peter 3:11-14).
 - In Titus, the "grace of God" is portrayed as both the means of salvation and the power for sanctification. It trains us to reject worldly passions and embrace sensible, righteous, and godly living. This present lifestyle is lived "while we wait" for the "blessed hope."
 - Peter uses the certainty of future judgment and purification to challenge the quality of our current lives. The rhetorical question, "what kind of people ought you to be?", demands a reflection on holiness.
 - Living a holy life is not a passive activity; it requires effort: "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." Anticipation of Christ's purity should lead to a pursuit of personal purity.
- **Encouragement through the Promise:** The promise of His return is meant to comfort and encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).
 - In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the Apostle Paul describes the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the subsequent gathering of all believers to meet the Lord in the air. This vision addresses the Thessalonians' anxiety about those who had already died. The "words" he refers to are the promise that all believers, living and dead, will ultimately be united with Christ forever.
 - The return of Christ is a family reunion with our Lord. This hope transforms grief and anxiety into comfort and peace. The church is called to actively use this promise to "build each other up," strengthening the community through mutual encouragement.

Discussion Questions

- **Practical Vigilance:** How does the command to "stay awake" (Matthew 24:42) change your approach to your daily routine or career?
- **Evaluating Distractions:** Luke 21:34 mentions "anxieties of life" as a trap. What are the modern anxieties that most frequently distract you from spiritual readiness?
- **The Role of Grace:** According to Titus 2:11-12, how does God's grace empower us to live godly lives, rather than just our own willpower?
- **Community Support:** How can we more effectively use the promise of Christ's return to encourage someone in our community who is currently suffering or grieving?
- **Reflective Living:** If you knew Jesus was returning tomorrow, what changes would you feel compelled to make in your life today?

Closing Reflection

The distinction between the Rapture and the Second Advent provides profound clarity on the nature of God's prophetic timeline and His relationship with both the Church and the world. The **Rapture** is a message of *imminent hope* and *comfort* for believers, emphasizing that Christ could return at any moment to privately redeem His people before a period of global judgment. This event is exclusive to the Church and designed for reunion and escape from the coming wrath.

In contrast, the **Second Advent** is a message of *public triumph* and *judgment*, where Christ physically returns to Earth in power and glory to defeat evil, establish His kingdom, and reign righteously. Understanding that these are two separate events, with different purposes and timing, helps us appreciate the precision of biblical prophecy and the multifaceted nature of God's redemptive plan. The rapture promises a rescue; the second advent promises a ruler. Both events compel us to consider the certainty of Christ's return.

Takeaway Challenge

Given the distinct biblical descriptions of these two events, your challenge is twofold:

- ❖ **Cultivate a Posture of Imminent Readiness:** The "any-moment" nature of the Rapture, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, is presented as a comforting hope meant to inspire holiness and watchfulness. Challenge yourself to live each day with intentional awareness of Christ's potential imminent return. Ask: "If Jesus were to return in the next hour, would my life reflect a 'ready' and dedicated follower?" Use this perspective to prioritize your time, relationships, and spiritual growth.
- ❖ **Articulate the Hope with Clarity:** Because the terms "Rapture" and "Second Coming" are often conflated in public discourse, challenge yourself to be able to clearly and compassionately explain the key biblical distinctions to others. Use passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 (rapture in the air) and Matthew 24 (second coming to the earth) to show how the Bible teaches two separate returns, providing a solid foundation for your eschatological understanding and a source of genuine comfort to those seeking hope.