

The Second Coming of Christ

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Introduction

A popular colloquialism is, "the only two things guaranteed in life are death and taxes." To the regenerate Christian a third condition may be added, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There is little, if any, debate over this event. Many scriptures indicate clearly that Christ is to return. Jesus himself promises he will return.

John 14:3

"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.

Matt 24:27

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt 24:30-31

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matt 24:37

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt 26:64

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Matt 16:27-28

27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

28 "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

In addition to the words of Jesus, there are numerous other clear and direct statements regarding the second coming of Jesus. A listing of most, if not all, scripture referring to the second coming of our Lord may be found in appendix A.

1Thes 4:15-16

15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 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.

Acts 1:11

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."

Acts 3:20-21

20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

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21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Other direct statements in the New Testament include the book of Matthew, chapters 24-25; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Phil 3:20-2; 2 Thes. 1:7, 10; Titus 2:13. References are also made by the Apostle Paul in 1Cor. 1:7, 15:23; 1Thes. 2:19, 3:13, 5:23; 2 Thes. 2:1, 8; 1Tim. 6:14; 2Tim. 4:1, 8; as well as other writers in Heb 9:28; Jam 5:7-8; 1Pet 1:7, 13; 2Pet. 1:16, 3:4, 12; 1Jn 2:28. The parable of the nobleman by Jesus also speaks to his return, Luke 19:12-27.

We, the believers, are to be watchful for his return.

Matt 25:13

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Matt 24:44

"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Matt 24:50

"the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,

Aspects of Christ's second coming: it will be a literal physical return,

Acts 1:11

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."

... it will be visible to all nations and peoples,

Matt 24:30

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

... it will be unexpected to those not watching,

2 Pet 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.

Matt 24:36

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Mark 13:32

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

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Luke 21:34

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

... and in great power and glory.

2 Pet 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.

Matt 26:64

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

However, that appears to be the extent of the agreement. While the Second Coming is part of "core" Christian belief, there is little unity on how that will occur. While the fact of the second coming is very emphatically and clearly asserted in scripture, the time is not.

Matt 24:36-44

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "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.

40 "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Acts 1:7

And He said to them, "**It is not for you to know** times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Mark 13:32-37

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.

34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning--

36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

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There are several mainstream Christian positions concerning the second coming of Jesus; the Pre-, Mid-, and Post-Tribulationist view, the Historical, Pre-Millennium, Amillennium and Pre-Wrath views. Due to overwhelming acceptance of a pre-tribulation rapture within the conservative evangelical community of believers, (of which I am) this study will analyze and contrast the pre-tribulationist view with scripture.

Rapture: A Pre-Tribulationist View

Those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture believe Christ's coming will actually take place in two stages, the first stage being the (1) "Coming **For**" the saints, The Rapture and (2) the "Coming **With**" the saints, The Return. These two events will be separated by the great tribulation lasting about seven years in duration.

Stage One: Coming for the Saints - Rapture

This first stage will occur in secret, not noticed by anyone but the church. It is to precede the great tribulation. As such, there is no prophesy that need take place prior to its fulfillment. Therefore, those believing in pre-tribulation rapture believe its fulfillment to be "imminent," that it can take place at any time. The church will be physically removed, "raptured" from the earth and from the agony of the Great Tribulation.

Stage Two: Coming with the Saints - Return

At the completion of the seven year period of Great Tribulation, the Lord will triumphantly return again "with" the saints. This second stage will be a conspicuous, glorious, universally recognized event. Jesus will then set up His earthly kingdom and rule with the saints one thousand years. This stage will usher in the beginning of the Millennium.

EXEGESIS: New Covenant

The bible holds that the second coming of Christ will be a single occurrence, a unified, singular event, Appendix A. All prophesies and scripture refer to a singular event in contrast to the pre-tribulationist view that holds some prophesies refer to a secret rapture, a separate and distinct stage one event, a coming for the church while other passages refer to the revealed coming, a separate and distinct stage two event.

Let's examine the Scriptural evidence to determine the validity of a two stage return; a separate and distinct secret stage one and visible stage two doctrine.

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There are three Greek words used in scripture to represent the second coming of Jesus Christ. (1) **parousia** **parousia** (par-oo-see'-ah) (2) **apokalupsis** (**ap-ok-al'-oop-sis**) and (3) **epifaneia** **epiphaneia** (ep-if-an'-i-ah.) There is one Greek word, **arpazw** **harpazo** **har-pad'-zo** that has been translated in the Latin Vulgate as *rapio* in 1Thessalonians 4:17. The English translation of the Latin Vulgate *rapio* is rapture. The definitions and all occurrences of the four Greek words in scripture is included as Appendix B.

Some have mistakenly taken the word (1) *parousia* to indicate a pretribulation secret stage one rapture, and distinguishable from the words (2) *apokalupsis* and (3) *epiphaneia* which refer to the revelation of Christ's return, the visible and seen stage two event.

Upon careful examination of these scriptures, I see no real evidence to support a two stage pre-tribulation secret rapture of the believers as a separate and distinct stage one event, as distinguishable from the visible return of Christ, a stage two event.

Because the terms *parousia* and *harpazo* are fundamental to the onset of a two stage rapture theory, let's begin with an examination of the scriptures that use these terms beginning with *harpazo*. (King James AV unless indicated otherwise)

arpazw harpazo (har-pad'-zo)

726. arpazw harpazo (har-pad'-zo)

from a derivative of **138**; to seize (in various applications):--catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force).

AV-catch up 4, take by force 3, catch away 2, pluck 2, catch 1, pull 1; 13

1) to seize, carry off by force

2) to seize on, claim for one's self eagerly

3) to snatch out or away

Scripture: Mt 11:12, 13:19; Jn 6:15, 10:12, 28-29; Ac 8:36, 23:10; 2Cor 12:2,4; 1Ths 4:17; Jd 23; Rev 12:5

Because the use of *harpazo* in 1Thessalonians is so fundamental to the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine, let's begin with an examination of that scripture.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up <726 harpazo>** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The context of this scripture clearly refers to the visible return of Jesus with the reference of meeting Him in the clouds. Christ Himself speaks of His visible return as coming in the clouds of the air in Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Mark 13:26; and Luke 21:27

Matt 24:30

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

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Matt 26:64

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 13:26

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Luke 21:27

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 is clearly referring to the visible return of Jesus, not some secret stealth appearance. We will also very clearly see as we continue to develop this study that the use of the term *harpazo* is indeed referring to the bodily resurrection of all the saints. Harpazo is what occurs to the living saints at resurrection. One of the primary functions of Jesus at His return is to resurrect and reward the saints. (Appendix D) Let's continue with an examination of the Greek word parousia.

parousia parousia (par-oo-see'-ah)

3952. parousia parousia par-oo-see'-ah;

from the present participle of **3918**; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; specifically, of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by implication) physically, aspect: KJV-- coming, presence.

Scriptures: Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1Cor 15:23, 16:17; 2Cor 7:6-7, 10:10; Phil 1:26, 2:12; 1Ths 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2Ths 2:1, 8-9; Jam 5:7-8; 2Pet 1:16, 3:4, 12; 1Jn 2:28

1 Corinthians 15:23

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his **coming <3952 parousia>**.

This scripture clearly points out that the word parousia is used in the context of the one and only second *visible* coming of Christ. This scripture is also clearly referring to the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, "But every man in his own order," Jesus being the "firstfruits" of the harvest (Ac 26:23.) It speaks to the *order* of resurrection, "Afterward they that are Christ's," the believers who occupy an "in Christ" position, and the time of their resurrection, "at his coming, parousia." The bible refers to this event as the **First Resurrection**.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming <3952 parousia>?

The saints that have died (sleep) PRIOR to the return of Jesus are in the presence of the Lord at his coming.

1Thes 4:14

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

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Rapture states Jesus is coming alone to gather his saints, then return to heaven. Paul is not referring to a separate and secret stage one rapture but to the one and only second coming of Christ. This is a difficult leap to designate the term parousia to a secret stealth appearance of Jesus prior to his visible coming. The term parousia is clearly being used in context with the one and only visible return of Jesus with and for His saints. He is coming for those who remain alive upon the earth at His coming in power and glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the **coming <3952 parousia>** of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

Those who sleep, refer to the saints that have died prior to His return. But what is the meaning of the phrase, "shall not *prevent* (come before, precede) them which are asleep (dead)?" What is not being preceded? Answer: Their new eternal bodies being **resurrected** at the return of Christ. **Those who have died prior to the return of Christ have their bodily resurrection prior to those who are alive and changed.** This is the first resurrection, a bodily resurrection. Most, if not all resurrection scriptures are included as Appendix D.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

¶ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the **coming <3952 parousia>** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1

¶ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the **coming <3952 parousia>** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

James 5:7

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the **coming <3952 parousia>** of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

James 5:8

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the **coming <3952 parousia>** of the Lord draweth nigh.

The above four scriptures indicate that we are to wait patiently in the Spirit for the return and gathering of the church by Jesus at His one and only visible coming. This tends to deny a secret stage one rapture event for the pre-tribulationists often speak to a stage one **rapture having nothing to do with the second coming of Jesus**. The above Scriptures speak plainly to our waiting patiently for the one and only second *coming* of our Lord. All these scripture are in context with the one and only physical and visible coming of Jesus.

2 Peter 1:16

¶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming <3952 parousia> of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

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Peter uses the term *parousia* to describe the coming of Jesus in power and glory, in the context of His Resurrection. Jesus is the first of the firstfruits of our resurrection. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables" refers to the attacks from scoffers that reject the notion that Jesus has risen from the dead. Peter concludes that he and others "were eyewitnesses" of the glory and majesty of a risen Christ!

2 Peter 3:4

And saying, Where is the promise of his **coming <3952 parousia>**? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

1 John 2:28

¶ And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall **appear, <5319 phaneroo>** we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his **coming <3952 parousia>**.

The use of the word *parousia* in the context of the second coming can in no way be used as proof text to support a secret stage one occurrence. Let's examine the use of the word *parousia* in other scripture also referring to the return of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the **coming <3952 parousia>** of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Notice the term "*parousia*" refers to Jesus returning "with" his saints. This is clearly referring to what the two stage rapture theory calls stage 2. The word *parousia* clearly does not support a stage one occurrence, Jesus coming for His saints as a distinct and separate occurrence than Jesus coming with His saints.

Let's examine three additional scriptures that also validate and reinforce this point.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be **revealed, <601 apokalupto>** whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the **brightness <2015 epiphaneia>** of his **coming <3952 parousia>**:

2 Thessalonians 2:9

Even him, whose **coming <3952 parousia>** is "after" the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Rev 20:2

He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Jesus returns to resurrect the bodies of His saints (both living and dead) after the working of Satan when he (Satan) will be revealed and bound for a thousand years. The context of this chapter in 2nd Thessalonians has Paul warning them that there *must* be specific events that occur *before* Jesus returns for them.

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Paul references that “parousia” will be after the time of “the working of Satan,” not before it. We will examine tribulation, wrath and the working of Satan scriptures later in the study. However, this scripture does beg to question a “pre-tribulation” rapture and also brings into question the “imminence” of the second coming doctrine.

2 Peter 3:12

Looking for and hasting unto the **coming <3952 parousia>** of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

All the above scriptures clearly refer to the term “parousia” being used to denote the physical return of Jesus in power and great glory. The scriptures examined so far in no way support a separate and distinct rapture of the saints as a distinguishable event from the one and only physical and visible return of Jesus.

As we will see upon examination of the remaining words used to refer to the second coming, *apokalupsis* and *epiphaneia*, that there is not even a hint of a rapture event as separate and distinct from the second coming. In fact, it is *impossible* to do for the terms *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis* clearly mean “visible,” “seen,” to be “revealed” and “known.”

In truth, the use of the variety of terms to represent the second coming of Jesus is not an indicator that there will be two stages but rather the interchangeableness of the terms point to a single event.

Based upon the use of the term *parousia*, the scripture themselves reject the notion of a “secret” and “unseen” return of Jesus for his church. Therefore, use of the term *parousia* to support a secret stage one return of Jesus “for” his saints must be rejected. Let’s take a look at the remaining scriptures beginning with *apokalupsis*.

***apokalupsis* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis)**

602. *apokalupsis* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis)

from 601; disclosure:--appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation.

1 Corinthians 1:7

So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the **coming <602 apokalupsis>** of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall **be revealed <602 apokalupsis>** from heaven with his mighty angels,

1 Peter 1:7

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the **appearing <602 apokalupsis>** of Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 1:13

¶ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be

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brought unto you at the **revelation <602 apokalupsis>** of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 4:13

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be **revealed <602 apokalupsis>**, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

All the above scripture point the coming of Jesus as a visible event that we who are alive will be waiting for. **If the two stage rapture theory were to be correct there would be no one waiting for we would already be with him.** You can't wait for something you already have, and you can't be in two places at one time. The Apostles Peter and Paul both reject the concept of a separate and distinct secret stage one rapture from the visible and singular return of Jesus. Let's examine the final word epiphaneia.

epifaneia epiphaneia (ep-if-an'-i-ah)

2015. epifaneia epiphaneia ep-if-an'-i-ah;

from **2016**; a manifestation, i.e. (specially) the advent of Christ (past or future):-- appearing, brightness.

Titus 2:13

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious **appearing <2015 epifaneia>** of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

1 Timothy 6:14

That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the **appearing <2015 epifaneia>** of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his **appearing <2015 epifaneia>**

How can we still be looking for the Lord in Titus 2:13 if we will be with him at his return? Many pre-tribulationists attempt to use the phrase *blessed hope* as a proof text for the stage one rapture. This is in no way supported in context, exegetically, nor anywhere else in scripture (see Appendix B.) Paul clearly states that born again saints will be alive and waiting for our Lord Jesus at His return. Again, the interchangeableness of the scripture tends to be a strong support for the return of Christ as a singular event, not a stage one secret rapture and subsequent return.

1Thes 4:14-17

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

15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming <3952 parousia> of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 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.

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up <726 harpazo> together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the central to the foundation of a secret stage one rapture theory. It is hard to conceive of a secret stage one rapture with this section of scripture. This in no way supports a secret stage one rapture event. Verse 16 clearly identifies the Lord *not* coming for the saints in a stealth manner (stage 1) but with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet call of God. This is a very visible, very conspicuous return.

“We who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord.” This is according to the Lord’s own word. This is clearly referencing the time frame of Gods return in power and glory and might. He is returning with a **“loud command”** the **“shout of an archangel,”** and with the loud **“trumpet call of God.”** The dead in Christ will rise first, and we who remain “will be caught up with him in the air” is the First Resurrection. It is very difficult to find the secret coming of Christ in these 4 verses.

Matt 24:31

"And He will send His angels **with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Those who are alive will receive their eternal spiritual bodies as will the saints who have died. This is descriptive of the First Resurrection of the born again children of God. (see Appendix D)

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

42 So also is the **resurrection of the dead**. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

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**.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

What is the mystery that Paul tells the Corinthian saints? **That you need not die to be part of the First Resurrection**. The Resurrection is the act of the saints receiving their eternal spiritual body. “We shall not all sleep,” is how Paul words it in verse 51 ... but, **“we shall all be changed.”** The receipt of our eternal bodies at the return of Jesus the bible describes as the First Resurrection.

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The *Mystery* is not all need to experience death to participate in the First Resurrection. The dead will be raised incorruptible AND this mortal (those who remain alive) shall put on immortality (their eternal bodies.) Paul goes on to state that we are to be STEADFAST and IMMOVABLE in this belief. Acceptance of the apostate (false) doctrine of rapture is not being steadfast and immovable.

1 Corinthians 15:53-54

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

For this corruptible (a body that must die) must put on incorruption (a spiritual body that will never die) and this mortal (those who are alive, in their mortal body) must put on immortality (spiritual body that will never die.) Both the living and the dead receive the same reward, an eternal spiritual body that will never die, decompose, get sick, hurt or feel any pain.

Revelation 21:4

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

The dead in Christ will be raised and given their new immortal bodies first, then those who remain alive shall instantaneously and forcefully (harpazo) receive their immortal spiritual bodies and rise up to meet Jesus in the air. This is the First Resurrection of the saved in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:2

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

Rev 20:6

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Christ Himself was the firstfruit

1 Corinthians 15:20

But now is **Christ risen** from the dead, [and] **become the firstfruits** of them that slept.

Acts 26:23

"that the Christ would suffer, that **He would be the first to rise from the dead**, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

2 Corinthians 4:14

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus **shall raise up us also by Jesus**, and shall present [us] with you.

Rom 6:5

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly **we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection**,

The Second Coming of Christ

Rom 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 6:14

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and **will also raise up us** by his own power.

2 Tim 2:18

who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

The believers are the firstfruits of the Kingdom of God. We will, from that moment forward for eternity be with the Lord in our new eternal body and live a sinless and holy life. Our struggle with sin will be over. This is the culmination of the blessed hope that the saints have lived and died for throughout the ages.

Revelation 7:16-17

16 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

17 "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 21:4

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

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**.

Christ Will Come as a Thief

The pre-tribulationists that support a secret stage one rapture also do so on the basis of Scriptures that refer to the coming of the Lord as a "thief in the night." Dispensationalists presume this to mean coming in a secret, stealth manner, not being seen by anyone. Let's examine the "thief in the night" Scriptures to see if their context is supported in Scripture.

1Thessalonians 5:2

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so **comes as a thief in the night**.

1Thessalonians 5:4

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that "this Day" should **overtake you as a thief**.

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.

The Second Coming of Christ

These scriptures all refer to the “Day of the Lord,” the very visible coming of Jesus in power and glory. How are we to understand what is meant by “as a thief?” Let’s let the scripture and Jesus himself explain starting with the words of Jesus.

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, **I am coming as a thief**. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Revelation 3:3

"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.

Jesus himself explains what He means by coming as a thief. We are to be watchful and diligent. There is no time to be lax concerning our walk with the Lord.

Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

It is clear from scripture that coming as a thief is meant to be interpreted as a call for Watchfulness! ... A call for Diligence! To read more into the scripture is to be cavalier with the Word of God.

To recap, there does not appear to be any Scriptural support for a two stage “secret” rapture of the church happening “prior” to the visible return of Jesus. Scripture tends to negate the concept of a pre-tribulation rapture. The scripture strongly supports Christ’s return “with” his saints (those who have died) and his return “for” his saints (those who remain alive) as a singular, one-time event. Jesus returns **once** “with” and “for” his church in great power and glory. Those who are alive at this time will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye as we rise to meet him in the air and are united with those born again saints who pre-decease us. We are all clothed together in our new, eternal physical bodies. We will be with each other and the Lord, forever ... throughout eternity!

“Imminence” of the Second Coming

Pre-tribulationists believe the return of Christ may happen at any moment and that we are to be prepared at all times. Chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew speak to the issue of preparedness and watchfulness. Jesus urges His disciples to be ready for His coming, since they do not know the day nor the hour it will take place.

Matthew 24:36-37

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "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.

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Matthew 24:42

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

The position of the pre-tribulationists seems to be if other events were to take place first, such as the Great Tribulation, it is difficult to understand why he spoke of the time as unknown, for we would know at least that the return will not occur until after those other events have transpired.

There is repeated emphasis that we are to "wait eagerly," for the Lord's coming is at hand.

Romans 8:19-25

- 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.
- 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;
- 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
- 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.
- 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.
- 24 For we were **saved in this hope**, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?
- 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we **eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**

We eagerly await the redemption of our body - the First Resurrection - at the return of Jesus (verse 23.) That is the **hope** of our salvation, the **return of Jesus** and the **Resurrection** of our eternal bodies.

1 Corinthians 1:7

so that you come short in no gift, **eagerly waiting for the "revelation"** of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Philippians 4:5

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Titus 2:13

looking for the **blessed hope and glorious appearing** of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

James 5:7-8

- 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the **coming of the Lord**. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.
- 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the **coming of the Lord** is at hand.

Proponents of a pre-tribulation rapture theory believe Paul's statement in Titus 2:13 implies the next event in God's plan is the rapture of the church at the secret coming of our Lord. Their logic? ... If the next event were the Great Tribulation, why would we need hope and anticipation? Instead, would not fear and apprehension be the most probable reaction?

The Second Coming of Christ

Would it not stand to reason that since the next event on God's timetable is the return of Jesus, that it could and should happen at any time?

While on the surface this position for an imminent return may appear plausible, I believe it to be seriously flawed. Tribulation is what an unbelieving, hopeless world should be apprehensive and fearful of, not born again believers. While it is true we don't know how long the delay will be, (nearly 2,000 years have passed already) nor the *precise* time of His return, (day nor the hour) we can still know it is not yet. Not knowing when it will occur does not preclude knowing certain times when it will not occur. This certainly makes the call to be watchful for the events that precede the Coming of Jesus plausible, as does the call for vigilance and patience.

The statements of Jesus, at the time he said them, did not express imminence. In fact, He indicated through at least *three parables* that there was to be a "**delay**" in His coming. The parable of the nobleman who went to a far off country in Luke 19:12-27:

Luke 19:12-27

- 12 Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a **kingdom and to return.**
- 13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, '**Do business till I come.**'
- 14 "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'
- 15 "And so it was that **when he returned**, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, **to be called to him**, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.
- 16 "Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'
- 17 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'
- 18 "And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'
- 19 "Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'
- 20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.
- 21 'For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'
- 22 "And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.
- 23 'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'
- 24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'
- 25 ("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')
- 26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, **even what he has will be taken away from him.**
- 27 'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'"

The Second Coming of Christ

The companion parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-34:

Matt 25:14-34

- 14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.
- 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.
- 16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.
- 17 "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.
- 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.
- 19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
- 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'
- 21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
- 22 "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'
- 23 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
- 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.
- 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'
- 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.
- 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.
- 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.
- 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.
- 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.
- 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.
- 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

The wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25:1-13:

Matt 25:1-13

- 1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to **ten virgins** who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
- 2 "Now **five of them were wise, and five were foolish**.
- 3 "Those who were **foolish** took their lamps and **took no oil** with them,
- 4 "but the **wise took oil** in their vessels with their lamps.
- 5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, **they all slumbered and slept**.

The Second Coming of Christ

- 6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'
- 7 "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'
- 9 "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'
- 10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and **those who were ready went in with him** to the wedding; and the door was shut.
- 11 "Afterward the **other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'**
- 12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **I do not know you.**'
- 13 "**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

The story of the faithful, wise servant and the evil servant in Matthew 24:45-51:

Matt 24:44-51

- 44 "Therefore you also **be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
- 45 "Who then is a **faithful and wise servant**, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?
- 46 "Blessed is that servant whom his master, **when he comes, will find so doing.**
- 47 "Assuredly, I say to you that **he will make him ruler** over all his goods.
- 48 "But if that **evil servant** says in his heart, '**My master is delaying his coming,**'
- 49 "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,
- 50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,
- 51 "and **will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.** There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

All these parables speak of Jesus **delaying** his return. *Delay is not imminence!*

Certain other events had to transpire before the second coming, namely Peter growing old and infirmed as he is led to his death. Peter knew how he was to die through direct revelation of Jesus as recorded by John.

John 21:18-19

- 18 "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."
- 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

Peter, knowing that the Lord would not return during his lifetime writes:

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.

2 Peter 3:12

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?

The Second Coming of Christ

Did Peter think the coming of the Lord was imminent? Absolutely not! He knew for certain that Jesus would not return during his lifetime.

The Apostles knew that the sun would turn dark and the moon into blood ...

Acts 2:20

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before the coming** of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

... and there would be a falling away (apostasy) from truth and Satan revealed.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

... and the gospel would be preached to all nations.

Matthew 24:14

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Revelation 14:6

¶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

... and the other prophesies of Matthew 24 must occur before the coming of the Lord.

Matt 24:1-27

- 1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.
- 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
- 3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
- 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.
- 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.
- 6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all **these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet**.
- 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilence's, and earthquakes in various places.
- 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows.
- 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.
- 10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.
- 11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

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- 12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
- 13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.
- 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.
- 15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),
- 16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
- 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.
- 18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.
- 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!
- 20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.
- 21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.
- 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.
- 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.
- 24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
- 25 "See, I have told you beforehand.
- 26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.
- 27 "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 not to say that it is inappropriate to speak of imminence, for it is appropriate to do so. What is imminent, however, is the complex of events that surround the second coming, not the second coming itself.

Let's return to Matthew 24 and pick it up again in verse 32.

- 32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.
- 33 "So you also, **when you see all these things**, know that **it is near-- at the doors!**
- 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.
- 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

What is Jesus teaching us here? "When you see all these things" is referring to the complex of prophetic events He outlined from verse four on. These **MUST** all take place first **before** what is near in verse 33? **His coming!** He is coming for His people and will resurrect both the saved dead and the living (1Cor 15:51)

- 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.
- 37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.
- 38 "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.

The Second Coming of Christ

These things must take place first and we do not know when those events will occur. It is the events that are imminent. These must take place before the coming of the Lord. I prefer to use the term impending, not imminent when talking about the actual return of Jesus. This is not a case of semantics. For as of the time of this writing, the Lord could not return for the events of his coming did not take place. I will go to sleep this evening "knowing" his return will not be tonight, though I pray it were. The complex of events being described in Matthew 24 may, however, occur tonight. That is imminent! The coming of the Lord, however is not imminent for the signs of His coming, like the parable of the fig tree illustrate, must occur first.

God's Elect

Who are God's elect? To answer that question, let's return to Matthew 24, starting with verse 28

Matthew 24:28-39

28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

29 "**Immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Jesus clearly states He will come *after* the tribulation in verse 29 when the moon will be darkened and the sun will not give its light.

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Then He will appear to gather the elect unto Himself. Pre-tribulationists purport the elect to be the nation of Israel only because they say the saints will have already been raptured away. We have proven this to be false, for there is no rapture prior to the physical return of Jesus in power and glory. Further proof is the use and context of the elect in scripture. (see Appendix C, page 8)

Matthew 24:22, 24, 31

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the **elect's sake <1588 eklektos>** those days shall be shortened.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if *it were possible*, they shall deceive the very **elect <1588 eklektos>**.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his **elect <1588 eklektos>** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark 13:20

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's **sake, <1588 eklektos>** whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Mark 13:22

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For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were possible*, even the **elect <1588 eklektos>**.

Mark 13:27

And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his **elect <1588 eklektos>** from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

All use of the word Greek word *eklektos* in the New Testament refer to the chosen of God who accept Jesus as Messiah and Lord and Savior. It is even used to signify Jesus Himself as the elect or chosen of God.

Luke 23:35

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the **chosen <1588 eklektos>** of God.

Luke 18:7

And shall not God avenge his own **elect <1588 eklektos>** which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

Romans 8:33

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's **elect <1588 eklektos>** ? *It is* God that justifieth.

Romans 16:13

Salute Rufus **chosen <1588 eklektos>** in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Titus 1:1

¶ Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's **elect <1588 eklektos>**, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

1 Peter 1:2

Elect <1588 eklektos> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

1 Peter 2:9

But ye *are* a **chosen <1588 eklektos>** generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

2 John 1:1

¶ The elder unto the **elect <1588 eklektos>** lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 John 1:13

The children of thy **elect <1588 eklektos>** sister greet thee. Amen.

Revelation 17:14

¶ These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and **chosen, <1588 eklektos>** and faithful.

The Second Coming of Christ

The Old Testament refers to ancient Israel as God's elect in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 65:9

I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; my **elect** shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there.

Isaiah 65:22

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My **elect** shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

The two stage secret rapture proponents mistakenly presume the use of the term elect to *exclusively* represent national Israel. This is clearly inconsistent with the Word of God. They are forced into misrepresenting scripture in order to maintain their pre-tribulation rapture doctrine. The scriptures themselves testify against them that a two stage return of Jesus with a secret stage one rapture is a false doctrine. Indeed the elect are the New Testament saints, "spiritual" Israel.

The Great Tribulation

Dispensationalists cry, "Does the bible not teach that those who are 'in Christ' will be spared the pain and suffering of the great tribulation, the wrath of God?" The biblical answer to that question is Yes, to the Wrath of God ... No, for the Great Tribulation.

Yes ...

Revelation 3:10

"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.

Luke 21:34-36

- 34 "But **take heed** to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and **that Day come on you unexpectedly**.
35 "For it **will come as a snare** on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.
36 **"Watch therefore, and pray always** that you may be **counted worthy to escape** all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

1Thessalonians 5:8-10

- 8 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.
9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

... and No

Matthew 24:9

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

The Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 7:14

And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 12:17

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Wrath of God is directed toward an unbelieving world and is not in any way directed toward His saints. Those born again Christians who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior will be counted worthy to escape the Wrath of God. However, there is scripture that indicate that some believers will indeed experience Great Tribulation. Much of the New Covenant prepares Christians for this very occurrence.

John 15:6

"If anyone **does not abide in Me**, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and **throw them into the fire**, and **they are burned**.

1 Corinthians 5:5

deliver such a one to Satan for the **destruction of the flesh**, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

There are penalties for not continuing to abide in Jesus and for not bearing fruit. While a born again Christian is guaranteed salvation upon the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he has not been promised an escape from tribulation. The following scriptures speak to that.

Acts 14:22

strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**"

1Thessalonians 3:3

that **no one should be shaken by these afflictions**; for you yourselves know that **we are appointed** to this.

An interesting contrast exists in First Thessalonians 3:3 and 5:9.

1Thessalonians 3:3

that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that **we are appointed** to this.

1Thessalonians 5:9

For **God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

In 5:9 Paul says, "God did not appoint us to wrath," yet in 3:3 he says, "we are appointed" to afflictions. Is Paul contradicting himself? Hardly! He is in fact validating the simple truth that some will escape while others will not. No contradiction, just the plain truth.

The Second Coming of Christ

Many who ascribe to the saints being spared from the agony of the Great Tribulation presume this to mean a “physical separation” from the Great Tribulation. While a physical separation may or may not be true, a **rapture** before the physical return of Jesus is **absolutely not true**. We have proven this to be unscriptural.

The bible speaks to many tribulational events. There is the Great Tribulation, tribulation in general, the wrath of Satan, the working of Satan, the Wrath of God, the Wrath of the Lamb, and the hour of trial. What are they and to whom are they directed?

The wrath and workings of Satan is directed to believers and non-believers alike while the Wrath of God and the Wrath of the Lamb is directed exclusively to non-believers and those not written in the Lamb’s Scroll (book) of Life.

Some escape and some must endure the events of Great Tribulation, suffering, death, martyrdom, captivity, persecution, imprisonment are conditional promises to those who endure to the end.

John 15:6

"If anyone **does not abide in Me**, he is **cast out** as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and **throw them into the fire**, and **they are burned**.

Those not abiding in Jesus do suffer great persecution and Great Tribulation. The parable of the 10 virgins of Matthew 25 strongly speaks to the pseudochristian apostates, those falsely proclaiming to be of the body of Christ, but aren’t. These are the false believers who embrace lies, apostasy, deception, false doctrines, false apostles, and false teachers proclaiming themselves as Christian. Though they proclaim salvation and Jesus, they proclaim a false Jesus, a false gospel and no salvation is gifted them. These are the men Jude, Peter, Paul and Jesus warn us about. These deceivers bring swift destruction upon themselves and those who follow them.

Summary

Those who believe in a two stage rapture believe Jesus will come to earth in a stealth manner prior to, during or after The Great Tribulation, but not as an event with His one and only physical coming to the earth in great power and glory. What many falsely claim to be rapture is in reality The First Resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who **has a part** in the **first resurrection**; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

The part the living have in the First Resurrection of believers is the mystery of the change ... the mortal putting on immortality, the perishable putting on the imperishable, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... at the seventh trumpet of Revelation. What a great

The Second Coming of Christ

blessing from God that does not exclude those believers alive at the one and only second return of Jesus.

Those proclaiming rapture as an event separate and distinct from the events of the First Resurrection at the one and only Second Coming of Jesus is a liar and deceiver. Remove yourselves from fellowship with such people proclaiming apostate doctrine.

Revelation 18:4

I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;

It is so vintage God for Him to subject those to the events of Great Tribulation that teach and preach a false rapture theory that removes them from Tribulation. The punishment would perfectly fit the crime.

When Jesus returns to the earth in His one and only Second Coming, He will first resurrect the dead and miraculously collect all the living and change them from mortal to immortal as part of the two events of The First Resurrection of believers; Judge and appropriately Reward the saints with their glorified bodies; Descend to the earth and put down all His enemies; Bind Satan the Dragon, Beasts and False Prophet for a thousand years and establish His Kingdom upon the earth.

This is a summary of some of the major and significant events surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus in addition to the events prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 through 8. The return of Jesus is at the seventh Trumpet of Revelation after The Great Tribulation which is the sixth seal and the first six trumpet plagues of the seventh seal of Revelation.

There is no such thing as a rapture that is separate and distinct from the events of The First Resurrection of the believers. There is no pre-tribulation rapture and return to heaven before The Great Tribulation. This mixing of good theology with bad is part of the prophesied apostasy and departure from The Faith. The saints will be gathered together for the First Resurrection to meet Jesus in the sky, but it will not be before the events of The Great Tribulation, nor will it be a secret, stealth event separate and distinct from The First Resurrection. It is not Jesus who turns, but the saints who return with Jesus to earth to defeat the enemies of God and establish the earthly reign with Christ. We will live and reign with God in our new spiritual bodies forever and ever.

1Thes 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.

While it may be linguistically acceptable to use the term rapture to describe the "specific event" of the saints meeting Jesus in the air as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, All born again Christians should **reject use of the term rapture** on the following grounds.

The Second Coming of Christ

1. **Rapture speaks to a specific “two” stage event as something separate and distinct from the First Resurrection at the one and only return of Christ.**

*This must be rejected on scriptural grounds, for scripture speaks to a single return of Christ. Rapture is an apostate replacement for **change** to those alive as part of the 1st Resurrection of the living and the dead saved in Christ at His one and only return.*

2. **Rapture is without biblical authority for it requires additional resurrections to reconcile with Scripture. There is no rapture or resurrections “prior” to Great Tribulation.**

This must be rejected on scriptural grounds, for the bible clearly speaks of the resurrection of believers happening at the return of Christ after Great Tribulation. Scriptures also speaks to saints experiencing the agony of the wrath of Satan at the time of Great Tribulation.

3. **Rapture speaks to a “secret” coming of Jesus for his saints.**

This must be rejected on scriptural grounds, for Jesus returns in great power and glory to be seen by all the earth. Coming as a thief in the night refers to our need for watchfulness, so that the day not overtake, or catch us by surprise.

4. **Rapture speaks to an “imminent” return of Jesus.**

*This must be rejected on scriptural grounds, for the return of Jesus is not before specific prophetic ‘signs of His coming’ must occur. The [signs](#) of His coming are [imminent](#), not the return of Jesus. Not knowing the specific time of God’s Coming does not mean we can’t know when it will **not** occur.*

5. **Rapture speaks to a physical “removal” of the saints to heaven and a physical removal from tribulation.**

This must be rejected on scriptural grounds. The bible speaks to a “divine protection” for some saints and not a removal. This denies the many scripture which speak to a reproof and correction of the saints during the time of tribulation. The church is present upon the earth during end time tribulation and many suffer death, martyrdom, captivity, and imprisonment.

6. **Rapture speaks to a minimum of three resurrections.**

This must be rejected on scriptural grounds for the bible speaks to two resurrections.

7. **Rapture makes a sharp distinction between national Israel and the church as the elect.**

This must be rejected on scriptural grounds. Such distinctions do not exist in Scripture. The “elect” is not used as the exclusive term for Israel. New Testament believers are often referred to as the elect as is Christ Himself.

The Second Coming of Christ

Continued use of the term rapture is non biblical in its general usage. Conservative Christians should refrain from formulating doctrine upon that which is unbiblical for that is unacceptable. The English translation of “snatched up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the Greek word *harpazo* which speaks to the specific event of the change living saints experience as part of the First Resurrection. Those who are still alive at the return of Jesus having their bodies forcibly changed into their eternal spiritual bodies as an event of First Resurrection. This is absolutely occurring at the singular, very visible, one and only return of Jesus Christ.

The use of the term “rapture” should be replaced with the true biblical term “harpazo” or “Change” and used in the context of the events comprising the First Resurrection. The events which some conservative Christians have coined as rapture indeed DO NOT describe factual, biblical and truthful events of the First Resurrection of the Firstfruits of God.” It is Resurrection ... not rapture ... that is the hope and earnest expectation of God’s people at the return of LORD Jesus.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

2 Tim 4:3-5