

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST
Matthew 24:23-31

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. The main event in God's prophetic program is the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The most dramatic event in all history will be the visible appearing of Christ in His return to judge evil men and to establish His kingdom over this earth.

- B. Jesus Christ is going to return to this world. Many so-called Christian leaders (better known as liberals) do not believe that Jesus Christ will literally and physically make a personal return to earth. They say he only comes again spiritually to those who receive Christ into the heart. Sometimes liberals just speak of a spiritual return of Christ and leave it. Some do not even want to mention the second coming of Christ. **NOTE:** How foolish they are, for one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament is related to the second coming of Christ. The survival of mankind as well as the fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament promises, especially to the believing Jewish remnant, are dependent on the second advent. **NOTE:** In His first advent, Christ fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies, but there are over 500 prophecies relating to His second advent that are not yet fulfilled.

- C. The scriptures are clear that Christ is going to return in exactly the same manner He left this earth.

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall also come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:10, 11

Just as Jesus departed physically, visibly and personally from the earth in His ascension, so He will return. Yet the second advent will be much different than was the first advent. In His first visit to this planet, Christ came as a Lamb to offer Himself as a sin offering for sinful men. When Christ visit's the second time, He will come as a lion to judge those who failed to avail themselves of the gift of salvation found in Jesus Christ.

II. FALSE RUMORS OF CHRIST'S RETURN -- Matt. 24:23-26

- A. "Then if any man shall say unto you" -- The "then" refers back to the Great Tribulation period which Christ says, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." The context of the Olivet Discourse refers primarily to the Jews or Israelites who will be alive when the Great Tribulation begins and who survive the terrible period to observe the second advent of Jesus Christ. **NOTE:** The Lord Jesus will have already secretly come for His Church before the Tribulation begins, and I personally feel that He will be in the Tribulation period with the Church, but His presence will be a secret presence, invisible, behind the scenes in a spiritual sense. Christ will reveal Himself and perhaps reveal the Church as well to Jews and Gentiles who respond to Him during the Tribulation period. Remember, the parousia or coming-presence of Christ has two phases -- His secret coming for the Church and His dramatic return to judge men and establish His kingdom.
- B. "Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not." The context is about the elect of God with primary emphasis upon Jewish-believers. The elect will repudiate Antichrist but there will be false teachers who will teach that Christ has already come and is hiding out in the world. **NOTE:** There will be some basis for these rumors. Since Christ will appear to some believers in the Tribulation, there will be rumors that will claim that He is actually on the earth in a visible, tangible sense.
- C. "For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." -- False prophets and false Christ's will perform super-natural phenomena misleading many. All of these psuedo Christ's and prophets will play into the hand of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:11-14b), for Antichrist will be accompanied by "lying wonders" from Satan himself (II Thess. 2:9). **NOTE:** So phenomenal will be the power of the false prophets and Christ's that the elect of God (in context the Jew but by application also the Gentiles who trust Christ in the Tribulation) will be almost persuaded, but they will not succumb to those lying wonders, proving that they are truly the elect of God.
- D. "Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." -- In the Tribulation period, there will be rumors about the mysterious presence of Christ because He will be seen by some during this time. But there will be many who will claim to have authoritative information as to where He may be found. The elect of God will say, "Where is Christ if you say He is alive on this earth?" These false prophets and teachers will lie and say Christ is hidden in the desert or locked away in a private room. Christ says, "Do not believe this!"

ILLUSTRATION: There is actually a false cult in California that believes that Christ has already returned and that He is hiding out in the desert. If men can believe that now, how much more will they believe it in the Tribulation period?

III. **FEATURES OF CHRIST'S RETURN** -- Matt. 24:27, 28

- A. “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.” -- Christ is speaking about His coming (parousia) and is referring to the visible, dramatic, bodily return of Christ in His second advent. He is not referring to the first phase of His coming (the Rapture of the Church) which is secret, but to the second phase which will be observable by all. Christ uses the illustration of lightning. The Lord’s return will be visible everywhere like a flash of lightning throughout the entire horizon. Anyone looking into the sky can see a flash of lightning. So the Lord’s second advent will be conspicuous to all, for they shall actually see Him coming.
- B. “For whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” -- Now the Lord uses the illustration of a carcass and vultures (eagles to speak of His return from Heaven. A person who has died in the desert will soon have vultures circling over his body. Perhaps the Lord is saying that just as you do not find a dead body by wandering over the desert, but by looking first to the sky, so the elect of God should not go from place to place searching for the Son of Man. Rather they should look to the Heavens for His return.

IV. FINAL RETURN OF CHRIST -- Matt. 24:29-31

- A. **INTRODUCTION:** It is important to distinguish the two phases of the parousia (coming of Christ). Parousia means coming and a remaining presence. The parousia has two phases: the secret and the open. The first phase occurs at the Rapture of the Church and the second phase at the Second Advent. The Second Advent is part of the parousia. It is the event that marks the end of the secret presence of Christ in the Tribulation period. Christ will be with His Church during the Tribulation but behind the scenes of the world events, invisible to the world. But the last phase of the parousia is the outshining of His presence to the whole world. What was secret to the Church during the Tribulation will be made open to the world. **NOTE:** Christ is said to destroy Antichrist with “the brightness of His coming.”
- B. II Thess. 2:8. Literally this says, “with the appearing (epiphany) of his coming (parousia). The word epiphany means unveiling or outshining. This then is a reference to the second advent or the dramatic appearance of Christ. It is the unveiling of His presence. It is the climax of the whole period that Jesus calls “the end of the age.”
- C. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days” -- Our Lord begins to speak of His second advent and the signs that will precede it. This section gives a direct answer to the question of the disciples that prompted the Olivet Discourse. They asked, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” -- Matt. 24:3. We know that the second advent will be after the Great Tribulation period.

- D. "Shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." -- Immediately after the Great Tribulation, there will be cosmic disturbances. Terrifying celestial phenomena will be seen by all men. It is not wise to try to second guess what those violent upheavals in nature will be, for we do not know anymore than the Bible tells us. We do know from Luke's account that these celestial signs will be so horrifying that "men will be fainting with fear" and there will be great "distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" -- Luke 21:25, 26. **NOTE:** The Old Testament prophets predicted the Lord's return would be accompanied by cosmic disturbances (Joel 2:30, 31; Isa. 13:9, 10).
- E. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:" -- After the cosmic disturbances, then Christ shall manifest Himself openly at the second advent. This will be the outshining of His glory. **NOTE:** The sign is more than just the return of Christ. The Olivet Discourse is primarily Jewish in flavor. The sign accompanying Christ's return will be something every Jew will recognize. The key to knowing the sign is found in Matt. 24:30: "and they (Jews) shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great glory." These clouds may just be atmospheric clouds but the context seems to make them more important. This is the cloud of the Shekinah glory that accompanied the children of Israel in the wilderness, and rested in the Holy of Holies in the temple of Solomon. The Shekinah glory was always a sign to the Jews that God was in their presence. God was dwelling in the midst of His people. **NOTE:** When Christ appears in His second advent, He will usher in a new age and the supreme characteristic of this new age is that God will be with His own people. This new age is the kingdom age that Christ shall set up in His second advent (Daniel 7:13). **NOTE:** What is the sign of the second advent: The Shekinah glory which tells us that God is dwelling with His people in the new age. Who is this God? It is Jesus Christ. He is Immanuel which means "God with us."
- F. "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." -- The tribes in context refer to the Jewish people, for we know that there are still 12 tribes of Israel known only to God. The nation Israel will mourn because they will realize the One they crucified is actually Jesus Christ, who is Savior, God and Messiah. The One coming in great glory is the One who bears the marks of nails and the wound of a spear (Zech. 12:10, 11). The Jews will realize that the One their fathers crucified is the One who died for their sins. They shall cry out in repentance and that generation of Jews shall be converted by God and go into the promised kingdom. **NOTE:** This mourning will not only be by Israel but the whole Gentile world will realize that Jesus Christ is Savior and God, (Rev. 1:7).
- G. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." -- The context demands that the primary identification of the elect by Jews (Isa. 11:11, 123). It may include also the elect of God among the Gentiles who trusted the Lord during the Tribulation period. **NOTE:** The second advent

will be a glorious day for all true believers in Christ. The Old Testament saints will be resurrected, the Church saints will return with Christ, the Tribulation saints will be saved. All of God's family will enter into the kingdom prepared by the Father. Oh glorious day!

V. **CONCLUSION**

- A. The future kingdom of God in its earthly and eternal states is only for believers in Jesus Christ. Those who believe shall inherit the kingdom. Those who reject Christ shall have no part in it and shall be assigned to eternal punishment -- Matt. 13:47-50.
- B. The second advent of Christ will be a glorious day for all true believers in Christ. But the second advent will be a day of gloom for those who do not know Christ as personal Lord and Savior. How sad that the day will be for willful rejecters of Christ -- II Thess. 1:7, 8.