

The Difference between “The Second Coming” and “Our Secret Going”

One of the most spectacular events that await believers who have put their faith in Christ's finished cross-work for the righteousness that is required for entrance into heaven, is also commonly called "the rapture" of the church. Opponents of this event say the word "rapture" is not found in the bible. However, while this is true, the doctrine for this event is true. The fact that we may leave this planet is clearly stated in several verses including 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. In 1 Corinthians 15, our lives can be immediately interrupted and "in the twinkling of an eye", we will be called home to be with Jesus Christ forever! It also says in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18 that as we look forward to this event, we are "to comfort one another with these words".

Think for a moment: Believers in the gospel of the grace of God can at any moment escape death if God were to intervene and cut us off at this time (Romans 11:22)! However, this wondrous event is also a bitter pill, for if God should call us home, we will no longer have the opportunity to be ambassadors for Christ and warn those who have rejected His righteousness, His peace, His intercession on our behalf. Still, our comfort should come as we encourage one another about those who have fallen asleep in Christ, as well as that great possibility of the "airborne exit" to be with Him for eternity!

The purpose of this article is not to debate whether or not Christ's saints will be caught up to be with Him in the air, because the bible states that. Instead, I feel that it is essential to point out the **difference** between Christ's "Second Coming" in Matthew 24 and Christ's "Secret Coming" in 1 Thessalonians 4 for these passages **do not** describe the same event!

In **Matthew 24** starting in verse 1, Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry is addressing His disciples who had just commented on the greatness of the temple. When Jesus prophesied of the destruction of the temple they asked Him; "*When shall these things be? And when will the end of the world come?*" We must remember when we read scripture, we must be sure we ask ourselves; "*Who is speaking and to whom*"...and "*How is God dealing with people at that time*"? We know that while Christ walked the earth, He was under the law and indeed stated that He Himself came to fulfill it (Mat. 5:17). As He continued to teach from Mt. Olive he warned His followers about false Christ's, wars and rumors of wars and continued:

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall

deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Most astute bible scholars will understand that Jesus Christ is speaking of the pending "great tribulation" in these verses. In a real life example of the "wrong division" of scripture and shortly after I became a believer, a pastor erroneously told me that I should be concerned when I asked Him of the passages above. At the time, my wife was pregnant with our third child and I was concerned about these passages which spoke of the pending possibility of doom! It wasn't until later that I learned that I had been wrongly instructed to read into something that was not my "to" mail.... and unfortunately, I gladly obliged by **not** investigating this for myself! It was later; I discovered that this pastor was not even dispensational. This means that he did not fully recognize (if at all) how God would change His dealings with mankind throughout the bible due to man's sin and rebellion! Christ continued to tell His disciples of the last days of this time:

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 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. 27 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.

Verse 27 of Matthew 24 should stand out in drawing a distinction between Jesus Christ coming to earth and believers going to Him. For believers under this glorious age of grace will be brought immediately into the presence of Christ without warnings or signs. There will be no "lightning from the east to shine to west". Worse, if I do not make a distinction between the verses in Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4, I must then assume that as a member of Christ's Body, I will go through the

dreadful great tribulation that is also spoken about in the rest of the verses of Matthew 24 (compare with Rev. 1:7, 19:17,18,)!

These very issues were of great concern to early grace believers. In addition, the references in the bible about the Lord coming as a "thief in the night" are for a future time and not to us for Jesus told Paul to tell us in the 5th chapter of **1 Thessalonians**:

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9

....Friends, this judgment and severity also known as "the fury of God" in Leviticus 26:28, is not for members of the Body of Christ. We are one with Jesus who is Our Eternal Head (Col. 1:18)..... It has been my experience to recognize that several, well-known ministries have made comparisons to the verses mentioned in this article and attempted to exegete them to the false conclusion that they say the same thing! Erroneously and almost hypocritically, they will then try to convince **post-tribulationists** (*those that believe The Body of Christ will go through the Great Tribulation*) they will not go through this time otherwise known as Jacob's Trouble (*another name for the GT - Rick*).

It is no wonder that there is so much confusion concerning this matter! However, there is a very simple solution that does **not** involve spiritual gymnastics that will clear up the differences in Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Back to the question of who is speaking? In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ is speaking. To whom is He speaking to? His disciples in response to the future of Israel. How is He dealing with mankind at the time? He is dealing through God's covenant people, the Nation of Israel, under the law which was clearly being dispensed by God The Father at that time.

No Gentile at that time could trust in Jesus Christ's finished cross-work which had not yet been understood nor revealed! Any person outside of Israel (Gentiles) had to come through God's covenant people via "The Law". It would only be revealed later that the wondrously, resurrected Jesus Christ spoke to Paul in His glorified position and instructed him to pass the benefits of this "good news" to all who would simply believe! Grace and truth did indeed come by Jesus Christ, **but**

His special, abundant grace was not revealed until the "chief of sinners" was saved. Nowhere outside of Paul's epistles do we read about our completeness in Christ, His all-encompassing forgiveness, the taking on of His very righteousness (justification) or any other spiritual blessings under grace. If you think this is inaccurate, take this simple test. Imagine our bibles without Paul's letters and re-think the requirements for salvation as well as the benefits that come along with it and then assess the differences in your faith.

In short, we must correctly partition or divide scripture to assure that it is "to" me. The entire bible is for my profit, but not all of it is directed to me. Yet, in both instances, we can learn! We can learn what **not to do** as we read about past history (principles) and we can read what God would **have us do today** (doctrine). In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ, under the law talking to Israel, spoke of a future time that did not pertain to Gentiles or more importantly, the Body of Christ. Why you may ask? As stated above, Jesus Christ had not yet revealed it to Paul since it was still a "mystery" hid in God. This logic makes perfect sense as you now read for yourself in Matthew 24 since the next event (as prophesied in Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, Revelation) pertaining to Israel is indeed the Great Tribulation. The bible is full of God exacting similar methods at different times (such as the Egyptian judgments taking on the same similarities of the Revelation judgments).

Hopefully, this information has brought more clarity between "The Second Coming"; when He comes to earth in the future (Zech. 14:4, Matt. 24:27) and "Our Secret Going", when we go to be with Him forever (1 Thes. 4:13-18, 1 Cor. 15:50-52, Titus 2:13, 2 Thes. 2:3)! I pray that this study has equipped and comforted believers while making a distinction between these two great events! It is also my prayer that believers would commit more time to the study of doctrine and less time to bible memorization.