

Parameter	CHRIST RETURNS FOR THE CHURCH 1 Thessalonians 4 1 Corinthians 15	CHRIST RETURNS VISIBLY TO EARTH Matthew 24 Matthew 25
Teacher and Audience	Paul talks to his churches	Jesus talks with his disciples
What is the Context of the Discourses?	<i>The context was to explain the resurrection of the dead. What happens to them?</i> “Regarding those which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” (2 Ths. 4:13) “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.” (1 Cor 15:17-18)	<i>The temple and Judaism. What is regarded as “rock solid” will be completely destroyed. Every stone will be moved. Antichrists will come and Judah will be dispersed.</i> “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?” (Matt.24:3)
Are There Any Preconditions?	<i>Only that Christ must be resurrected first as the firstfruits (which happened!)</i> “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ” (1 Cor 15:22-23)	<i>Two preconditions are mentioned.</i> “The Gospel must be preached to all the world, then the end shall come.” (v. 14) “There shall be a time of great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be.” (v.21)
What is the Triggering Event?	<i>The resurrection of both those who are asleep and alive occurs concurrently.</i> “The Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.” (1 Ths. 4:16) “Listen, I tell you a mystery : We will not all sleep , but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” (1 Cor 15:51-52)	<i>The revealing of the antichrist sets in motion events that transpire for 1260 (1290) days. This is the Great Tribulation.</i> “The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, (will) stand in the holy place” (v.15) “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (2 Ths. 3-4)
Where Does the Event Take Place?	<i>Those raptured are caught up (Gr: harpazo) into the clouds. No earthly location is specified where this occurs.</i> “Then we which are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Th 4:17)	<i>Jesus descends from heaven all the way to the earth. He is visible in the sky. He “touches down” on the Mount of Olives.</i> “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, <i>and there shall be</i> a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” (Zech. 14:4)

What Greek Word Is Used to Convey the Nature of Christ's Coming?

The word most often used for the coming of Christ is the Greek word, **parousia** (Strong's G3952), which means an "abiding presence" or "to come and reside, to stay." In some cases, it is translated "presence" rather than coming. (Ph 2:12, 2 Cor 10:10) It is used only 22 times as coming, twice as 'presence.' Examples of **parousia**:
"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy **coming**, and of the end of the world?'" (Matt 24:3)
"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." (Matt 24:27)
"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the **coming** of the Son of man be." (Matt 24:37)
"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his **coming**." (1 Cor 15:23)
"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**?" (1 Th 2:9)
"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the **coming** of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." (1 Th 4:15)
"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." (2 Th 2:1)
"And saying, 'Where is the promise of his **coming** for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.'" (2 Pet 3:4)
"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his **coming**." (1 Jn 2:28)

The word most often used for the coming of Christ appearing to the world is the Greek word, **erchomai** (Strong's G2064) The word is used mostly of persons "coming" from some other place. It is used to emphasize "making an appearance" in public. The word isn't used when emphasizing "a coming to reside and be with." It is commonly employed by biblical writers, appearing in over 600 places in the New Testament. In Matt 24 & 25:
"For many shall **come** in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." (Matt 24:5)
"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man **coming** G2064 in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt 24:30)
"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth **come**." (Matt 24:42)
"Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man **cometh**. (Matt 24:44)
"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his **coming**." (Matt 24:48)
"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom **cometh**; go ye out to meet him." (Matt 25:6)
"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man **cometh**." (Matt 25:13)
Erchomai contrasts with **heko** which is used in cases where the emphasis is 'one and done.' Once the coming occurs, it is an accomplished fact. **Heko** (Strong's G2240) is used in Matt 8:11, Matt 23:36, Matt 24:14, Matt 24:50, Rom 11:26, Heb 10:7, and also in several other key verses associated with Christ's coming again:
"But the day of the Lord will **come** as a thief in the night (2 Pet 3:10)
"But that which ye have already hold fast till I **come**." (Rev 2:5)

Who Comes with Christ at this Coming?	<i>The spirits of those who have died in Christ. "Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Ths.4:14)</i>	<i>The angels of Christ. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Ths. 1:7-8)</i>
What are the Signs Beforehand?	<i>No sign that is evident to the world. "For the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." (1 Ths. 4:17) No other signs are designated that will appear "just before" (preceding) His <i>parousia</i> (i.e., <i>abiding presence</i>)</i>	<i>The signs of Jesus coming visibly are ominous and obvious. "The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven" (Matt 24:24) "All the earth shall mourn; (v.24) "(The) sun will be darkened and the moon shall not give her light" (v.29) "The stars shall fall from heaven; the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (v.29)</i>
Who is Resurrected?	<i>From Paul's teaching, only those in the Body of Christ. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord; shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep (dead)" (1 Ths. 4:15) "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (those that sleep)" (v.17) "Those that belong to Him" (1 Cor 15:23)</i>	<i>No resurrection is specifically mentioned. But the elect is gathered. This appears to be the resurrection of the righteous. If the rapture has happened before, this would be the resurrected from the time before the Church, and the Tribulation period after the Church has been raptured. "The elect (is gathered) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt 24:31)</i>
Where are they Gathered?	<i>This is expressly stated: "In the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Ths. 4:17)</i>	<i>It is not expressly identified. It appears they are gathered in Jerusalem where the Messiah reigns as the ensuing judgments appear to occur next. He appears on the Mount of Olives.</i>
Is it Visible to All the World?	<i>No scripture indicates that anyone will see this event other than those who have been resurrected/ raptured when they are gathered together in the clouds with the Lord and one another. This stands in complete contrast to when the Lord comes in the clouds when "every eye will see him." (Rev 1:7) This is why the rapture is sometimes called, "the secret rapture." For those that are raptured, it will be anything but secret.</i>	<i>"Except the days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (v. 22) (This might be noted.) "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: 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." (v. 30) "Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him.'" (Rev 1:7)</i>
How Will the Event Be Announced?	<i>The trump of God may be the voice of God Himself. "With a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God" (1 Ths.4:16)</i>	<i>A trumpet of alarm. "A great sound of the trumpet." (Matt 24:31)</i>

	<p>“And the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.’” (Rev 4:1) (cf. Heb 12:19)</p> <p>“On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.” (Rev 1:10)</p> <p>“And the witnesses heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Come up here." (Rev 11:12)</p>	<p>“Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness.” (Joel 2:1-2, NAS)</p>
<p>Who Does the Gathering?</p>	<p><i>Jesus only is mentioned, not angels. (Jesus apparently does the gathering by the power of His word)</i></p> <p>“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” John 17:2,</p> <p>“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” (John 5:21, cf. 5:25)</p> <p>“For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice” (John 5:28)</p>	<p><i>The passage explicitly states:</i></p> <p>“The angels of God” (Matt. 24:31)</p>
<p>Who Knows When This Happens?</p>	<p><i>No indication that anyone knows the day nor the hour. However, there are numerous “types and figures” that suggest specific days during the Jewish calendar, such as Rosh Hashanah and Pentecost. “No one knows the day or the hour” may be a Jewish idiom for Rosh Hashanah.</i></p>	<p><i>No one knows. Yom Kippur during the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement, has often been speculated to be the specific day, but what year?</i></p> <p>“No man knoweth, no not the angels of heaven, my Father only” (v. 36, 42, 44, 50)</p>
<p>Why Are They Gathered?</p>	<p><i>To preserve them from the judgment that is coming:</i></p> <p>“To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” (1 Ths. 1:10, NIV)</p> <p>“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.” (1 Ths. 5:9-10)</p>	<p><i>The elect are gathered to enter into the Kingdom. But there is a distinction between those “elect” and the “rejected.”</i></p> <p>“At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom” (Matt 25:1) <i>Not all of the virgins enter into the wedding.</i></p> <p>“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them...” (Matt 25:14) <i>The wicked servant is expelled.</i></p> <p><i>See also the “sheep and the goats.” (Matt 25:31-46) They are separated into those who enter the kingdom and those who don’t.</i></p>

<p>What Judgment Occurs at the Time of This Event?</p>	<p><i>No judgment explicitly mentioned.</i> <i>Most assume that the Bema seat of Christ for believers (only) occurs just after we are gathered together.</i> <i>“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Cor 5:10)</i> <i>There is no mention of the judgment of unbelievers. The focus is exclusively on those who believe and are part of the Body of Christ.</i></p>	<p><i>The visible return is all about judgment.</i> (He) “shall gather all nations and shall separate them one from another (as sheep from goats) (Matt 25:32). “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” (2 Ths.1:7-9)</p>
<p>What Consequences Are Asserted as a Result of This Event?</p>	<p><i>No direct consequences noted other than being together and with the LORD.</i> <i>“After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Th 4:17)</i> <i>As the Kingdom is established, all authorities are put under Him. “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” (1 Cor 15:24, NIV)</i> <i>In this passage of Cor 15, Paul appears to be talking in broad brushstrokes, reciting only selected events... emphasis on destroying “principalities and powers” and death. He will shift to very specific detail about “conquering death” and how we will be resurrected, and what our bodies will be like.</i></p>	<p><i>Eternal punishment is promised.</i> <i>“These shall go away into everlasting punishment; the righteous into life eternal” (Matt 25:46)</i> <i>“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, I know you not.’” (Matt 25:11)</i> “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (v.30) “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (v.46) <i>There is no discussion about the nature of the bodies of those sent to eternal punishment. Except one might assume that they have teeth since they will be gnashed!</i></p>
<p>What Instruction Follows as a Result of the Teaching on This Event?</p>	<p><i>Believers are admonished to do good works and live lives worthy of their calling, while they encourage one another. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (v. 19)</i> <i>“Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” (2 Ths. 2:17)</i> <i>“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Ths. 5:11)</i></p>	<p><i>A series of warnings follow that the Lord will come when none expect him. Key word, “Watch!” Those who are sleep will be lost eternally. The message is this: those who are living unworthy lives are in grave danger. The message has no hope.</i> <i>“As the days of Noah” (see Matt 24:36, 42, 44, 50))</i> <i>He comes as a thief: “if you do not watch” (Rev 3:3). “Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments (clean)” (Rev 16:15, cf. Rev 3:5).</i></p>

	<p>“Live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and <u>to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.</u>” (Titus 2:12-14)</p> <p>“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor 15:58)</p>	<p>“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, I know you not.’” (Matt 25:11)</p> <p>“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (v.30)</p> <p>“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (v.46)</p>
<p>Who or What Comes as a Thief in the Night?</p>	<p><i>The children of the day are told not to focus on the day of the Lord. That day targets unbelievers.</i> “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” (1 Ths. 5:2)</p> <p>“(Do) not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.” (2 Ths 2:2-3)</p> <p>“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” (1 Ths 5:4-5)</p> <p><i>The day of the Lord is judgment not blessing. It is not directed at those who are His, the children of the day. They do not seek the day of the LORD.</i></p> <p>“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.” (Amos 5:18)</p>	<p><i>It appears the warnings have been directed at the children of the night.</i> “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day [of the Lord] should overtake you as a thief” (1 Ths 5:4). “That Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35). Those who expect it may no longer dwell on the face of the whole earth.</p> <p>“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 3:10)</p> <p>“Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.” (Isa 13:6)</p>
<p>Any mention or hint of the “other” event?</p>	<p><i>No mention other than an implication that it stands in contrast to the day of the Lord and enables believers to avoid the day of the Lord.</i></p>	<p><i>There appear to be several hints to those threatened with eternal damnation that they can escape the time of great tribulation if they become worthy by becoming a believer, one of the people of God.</i></p>

		<p>“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21:36)</p> <p>“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Rev 3:10-11).</p> <p>“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” (Isa 26:10)</p>
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