

The Return of Christ

Daniel's Dream

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay in bed" (Da 7:1). You would think you'd have either a dream or a vision, but it means that visions are frames or parts of an overall dream. That's why "he wrote the dream down" (:1). It was highly symbolic and about the future, which would make it prophetic. That is why it says it "was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (Mt 24:15). But it wasn't self-evident because he commented, "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me" (:15). He provides "the following summary" (:1) which covers an amount of time because he said "after this I kept looking" (:6,:7,:11,:13) a number of times. Also, time passed because he related that "I was contemplating" (:8). In addition, it was an interactive experience because he "approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this" (:16). It was similar to John's experience who "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev 1:10). He saw "a door standing open in heaven" (4:1) and heard, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things" (:1). John also asked "one of the elders" (7:13) just as Daniel did and the answer is thereby acknowledged with "he said to me" (:14). Daniel and John's visions were of the future but they were participating in the action "real-time" as if they were present themselves. On Pentecost Peter used Joel to prove that, we too, can receive dreams and visions (Ac 2:16) saying, "Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28). However, consider Daniel responding, "My thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself" (Da 7:28).

Daniel's Vision

In 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar captured the Jews from Jerusalem and exiled them to captivity in Babylon. Daniel was in that group. He "observed in the books the number of years . . . for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years" (Da 9:2). "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'" (Jer 29:10). Even nowadays we can find ourselves in precarious predicaments. "But with the temptation [God] will provide the way of escape" (1Co 10:13). "For I know the plans that I have for you", declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity'" (Jer 29:11). But then he advised, "Search for Me with all your heart . . . and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you" (:14). So Daniel gave "attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications" (Da 9:3). Then Gabriel visited him saying, "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed" (:23). God wants to give you "a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11) and says "come and pray to Me" (:12) and "I will bring you back" (:14). Another time Daniel "had been mourning for three entire weeks" (Da 10:10) and was visited again by a messenger referring to Daniel again as a "man of high esteem" (:11). He said, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words" (:12). Therefore, obey God's command to "Call upon Me . . . and I will listen to you" (Jer 29:12).

Day as Year

While Daniel "was speaking in prayer" (Da 9:21) Gabriel visited him saying, "I have now come forth to give you the skill to understand . . . therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision" (:22-23). He began saying, "Seventy weeks are determined" (:24). He then repeated, "Know therefore and understand" (:25). In modern times we know that there are fifty-two weeks in a year, so seventy weeks would be one year and eighteen weeks. God defines a week explaining, "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth . . . and rested on the seventh day, therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day" (Ex 20:11). A week is, of course, seven days. God told Moses, "You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath" (Lev 23:16). At seven days/week this would be "seven complete sabbaths" (:15). In Old Testament language a sabbath would be considered a religious week. The term sabbath can also be used symbolically. God said, "You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years . . . namely, forty-nine years" (25:8). Here sabbath means "seven" but the increment is a year as opposed to a day. Laban told Jacob, "Complete the week of this one . . . which you shall serve with me for another seven years" (Ge 29:27). Therefore when Gabriel said "seventy weeks" he meant 490 years. We are to know and understand this.

Gabriel's Message

Daniel was studying Jeremiah's prophecies and read, "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'" (Jer 29:10). Isaiah had prophesied, "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'" (Isa 44:28). To bring this to pass "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent out a proclamation . . . [saying that God] 'has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem'" (Ezra 1:1-2). Gabriel instructed Daniel that, "From the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (Da 9:25). Cyrus had "put it in writing" (Ezra 1:1). Zerubbabel said, "We ourselves will together build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us" (4:3).

Which decree was Gabriel referring to? When Daniel was in exile in Babylon, King Belshazzar was overthrown. Daniel had prophesied this saying, "Your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians" (Da 5:28). After Belshazzar was killed "Darius the Mede received the kingdom" (:31) in 539 B.C. They followed the "law of the Medes and Persians" (6:12). "Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (:28). However, the Persians under Cyrus the Great overthrew the Medes, conquering Lydia and Babylonia to fulfill Daniel's prophecy. The Edict of Cyrus in 538 B.C. allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. This is confirmed by the leaders testifying, "In the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God" (Ezra 5:13). Later this was contested but they searched the archives for the original decree and "a scroll was found" (6:2). Then Darius issued decrees (:8,:11) and said, "I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all diligence!" (:12) "They finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king

of Persia" (:14). The temple was dedicated in 516 B.C. However, Gabriel had referred to the "decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Da 9:25). The first phase of "seven weeks" (:25) or forty-nine years would cover that project.

Gabriel's Answer

Gabriel told Daniel to "give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision" (Da 9:23). It was the answer he had been praying for. Isaiah prophesied, "He declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built', and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'" (Isa 44:28). Gabriel explained that "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (Da 9:25). Time passes "until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes" (:25 NIV). Seven weeks is equivalent to 49 years and 62 weeks is 434 years totaling 483 years. But Gabriel had just explained that "seventy weeks have been decreed for your people" (:24) leaving a week to be accounted for. Gabriel had summarized six phases where the first three were "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity" (:24). He addresses this group saying, "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing" (:26). Sixty-nine weeks expire leaving a week which some call Daniel's "seventieth week." God was dealing with "your [Daniel's] people" (:24) which was according to the Law. But to complete the 490 year plan it would remain "to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place" (:24). The first three purposes were accomplished by Christ's first coming whereas the last three would need to be completed by the second coming. Therefore, transpiration of time was paused after the resurrection until it would resume to complete the 490 years. These are "times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Ac 1:7). This would allocate a time for the Gentiles in that "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (Ro 11:25). The seventieth week is not mentioned until Daniel 9:27 following the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Return from Exile

The temple was completed in "the sixth year of the reign of King Darius" (Ezra 6:15). "After these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, there went up" (7:1) to Jerusalem. "This is the copy of the decree which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest" (:11). The king stated that, "I have issued a decree" (:13) and repeated, "And I, even I King Artaxerxes, issue a decree" (:21). Consequently a second phase of the return from exile began in 457 B.C. They were even given the authority to "appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River" (:25).

Gabriel instructed Daniel to "give heed to the message and gain understanding from the vision" (Da 9:23). He said, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end to sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place" (:24). Furthermore, "there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again" (:25). Sixty-nine weeks are equivalent to 483 years. Counting from the decree of 457 B.C. one arrives at 26 A.D. Scriptural years are 360 days and an extra five days for each year and leap years must be taken

into account. Also, scripture tends to round off any part of a day or year to a whole number. Finally, an adjustment to errors in our present calendar of four years must be made which would establish that Christ was born in 4 B.C. Therefore the passage of 483 years would take the passage of time to when Christ began his ministry at thirty years of age. However, Gabriel stated that "after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off" (:26). Accordingly, some count the expiration of 69 weeks (483 years) to the year of crucifixion. This would cover "to make an end of sin, [and] to make atonement for iniquity" (:24). Therefore, a "seventieth week" remains to be fulfilled which scholars usually associate with the Second Coming.

Return of Christ

Before the Sanhedrin the high priest said, "Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God" (Mt 26:63). Not only did Jesus confirm it but also said "hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (:64). Afterwards at his ascension "clouds received Him out of their sight" (Ac 1:9) and "two men in white . . . [told them that Jesus] will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (:10-11). Later Peter warned that there will be those who ask, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" (2Pe 3:4 NIV). They will be those "walking according to their own lusts" (:3) saying, "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (:4 NIV). They are Jews referencing their ancestors but ignoring "that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water" (:5 NIV). Jesus had asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8) and Peter cites the lack of faith of these scoffers. He says "they deliberately" (2Pe 3:5 NIV) and "willfully forget" (:5 NKJV) "for when they maintain this, it escapes their notice" (:5 NASB). However, Paul warns that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against . . . [those] who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (:20). Peter instructs "that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us" (2Pe 3:2). He reminds that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . [and is] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (:9).

Jesus told his disciples, "There are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Mt 16:28). Six days later three of them accompanied him up a mountain and "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light" (17:2). Peter later related that "we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2Pe 1:16). You could say that this was done as a demonstration to dispel imaginations they might have harbored. You might say Jesus had to bring "down to earth" understandings that they otherwise might incorrectly develop about heaven. Also he knew his disciples would feel left out once he departed so to encourage them he advised, "Let not our heart be troubled" (Jn 14:1). He told them, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places . . . [and] if I go prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (:2-3). He confirmed it saying, "If it were not so, I would have told you" (:2) and

reiterated, "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you'" (:28). This is not just mentioned in passing. He said, "Now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass you may believe" (:29). "I am coming quickly" (Rev 22:7,12,20) is reinforced three times. In fact, the Second Coming is specifically mentioned in twenty-four books of the New Testament. I read where one author had counted over 300 references and another approximately 450 occurrences.

Second Advent

John prophesied, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7). Enoch prophesied, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones" (Jude 14). He "shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2Th 1:7). "The Lord will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind" (Isa 66:15). The Second Coming will come "immediately after the tribulation" (Mt 24:29). In "those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (:29). There will be "men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world" (Lk 21:26). "Just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:27).

His angels "will gather together His elect from the four winds" (:31). "In Christ all shall be made alive . . . at His coming" (1Co 15:22-23). "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives" (Zec 14:4). But "that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed" (2Th 2:3). Therefore, "we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). However, "not everyone has faith" (2Th 3:2) but we do not "grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1Th 4:13). Many "come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14). "The armies of heaven following him . . . were dressed in fine linen" (Rev 19:14) which are the "righteous acts of the saints" (:8).

Second Coming

Peter cited how the Old Testament prophets sought to know what "time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1Pe 1:11). Jude reports "that Enoch . . . prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones'" (Ju 10:14). Zechariah prophesied that "'the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations'" (Zec 14:3) and "'you will flee . . . [and] the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!" (:5). These are those who "God will bring with Him" (1Th 4:14) who "will be caught up together" (:17) in "our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1). "Creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the Sons of God" (Ro 8:19) and "the glory that is to be revealed in us" (:18). This revelation is an unveiling or exposure to view. We are to "wait for His Son from heaven" (1Th 1:10). Knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Php 3:20) we set our "mind on the things above" (Col 3:2) and when Christ is revealed "you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (:4). Paul prayed that God would "establish your hearts without blame in holiness . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" (1Th 3:13). Peter prayed that your faith "may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"

(1Pe 1:7). Paul prayed "that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7).

The event of the Second Advent is called the parousia. Jesus, whose presence is in heaven, comes to earth where his arrival is observed by everyone. When it occurs is not known but there are metaphors to describe it. "Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:27). It "will be just like the days of Noah" (:37). "They did not understand until the flood came and took them all away" (:39). "On the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Lk 17:29-30). "The powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (21:26-27). He will come "with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2Th 1:7) "and then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds" (Mk 13:27). Therefore "when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt 16:26). "All the tribes of the earth will mourn" (24:30). He "will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts" (1Co 4:5). "Each man's praise will come to him from God" (:5). Paul explains that he will receive "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Ti 4:8). He "will repay every man according to his deeds" (Mt 16:27). He "rescues us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10). "Then He will sit on His glorious throne" (Mt 25:31).

The Parousia

"Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when" (Mt 24:1) "one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!'" (Mk 1:13). Jesus answered, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Mt 24:2). "As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?'" (Mk 13:4). Later in the discourse he said "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky" (Mt 24:30). "You shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes" (10:23). This was prophesied by Daniel saying, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming" (Da 7:13). This Parousia occurs after the Great Tribulation when cosmic signs appear (Mt 24:29). It is when "the sun became black . . . and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to earth" (Rev 6:12-13). "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves" (Lk 21:25). "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes" (Joel 2:30-31). "Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near" (2:1). Jesus explains that at his coming

"He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds" (Mt 24:31).

Paul cites that it happens "in the twinkling of an eye" (1Co 15:52) "just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:27). It is "at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1Co 15:52). He explains that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout . . . and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1Th 4:16). Then he says "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (:15) "will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (:17). Jesus had stated, "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:3). "Everyone who is found in the book, will be rescued" (Da 12:1). Both Jesus and Paul place activity in the clouds and sky, and both cite a trumpet sound. Angels are involved in both accounts, and each says that the elect will be gathered together. It was revealed that, "Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Ac 1:11). All scriptures point to the Second Advent as being after the Tribulation which shows that there is no preliminary event before the Tribulation directly connected to the Parousia afterwards. The Gospels and Epistles are in agreement on this.

Presence

Paul told the Galatians "that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man . . . but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12). It was "the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past" (Ro 16:25). A revelation is an apokalupsis (Gr.) or uncovering of something which had previously been covered being a mystery because its understanding had been hidden. But it is an apocalypse since the secret has been revealed such as when "their minds were hardened" (2Co 3:14) but then the truth is brought to light when the veil is "removed in Christ" (:14). Peter then explains "the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). At any time the Holy Spirit "may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:18). However, Peter here is talking more about a revelation in the last days. Paul similarly discusses "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7). He also tells the Thessalonians "with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 2:1) to not be confused "to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" (:2). He had earlier explained to them "that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1Th 5:2). He equates the "day of the Lord" (2Th 2:2) to the "coming of our Lord" (:1).

The translators use the Greek word parousia to explain the Coming, and since it is synonymous with the day of the Lord, it refers to the Second Coming. The concordance describes it as "a presence" or "a coming" but with the NASB the latter is most always used. It is from "to be present" or "to have come" which carries the meaning "to exist by the side of." However, Jesus had already promised this saying to the disciples, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (Jn 14:18). His return would be a spiritual coming in the presence of "another Helper, that He may be with you forever" (:16) so that "you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (:20). Jesus also supplied a longer term application advising, "Let not your heart be troubled" (:1).

He said, "In My Father's house . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . [so that when you die] I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (:2-3). However, pretribulationists take "the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) to mean that they would "be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall be always be with the Lord" (:17) in heaven. They interpret this parousia as Jesus coming down partway to snatch believers from the earth prior to the Tribulation. They distinguish it from his epiphany or appearing prior to the Millennium as being the first phase of a two-stage Second Coming. Their Rapture is necessary to piece together all the events in the last days for them.

Appearance

Martha told Jesus that she knew her brother Lazarus, "Will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (Jn 11:24). Jesus had earlier said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:44). Revelation 20:5 cites this saying, "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection." The crux of the matter is that if there was a preliminary resurrection called the Rapture then scripture couldn't call a second resurrection the first. Therefore to iron this out you'd have to synchronize all the many scripture references to demonstrate that there is only one Second Coming. Jesus explained when this would occur saying that the "harvest is the end of the age" (Mt 13:39) and "so it shall be at the end of the age" (:40,49). It will be "on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Lk 17:30) at "the appearance of His coming" (2Th 2:8). Jesus related, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30). Daniel said, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him" (Da 7:13-14). "The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (16:27) and "then He will sit on His glorious throne" (25:31). In this harvest "the reapers are angels" (13:39) and Jesus explained, "I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn'" (:30). He will "send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness" (:41). They will "take out the wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (:49-50). "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (25:32). "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father" (13:43). Paul summarized the event to the Thessalonians "with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1).

"Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Lk 17:26). "They did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:39). "Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all" (Lk 17:27). "Lot went out from Sodom [and] it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (:29). "Just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of

the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:27). "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (:31). "Be on the alert--for you do not know when the master is coming . . . --lest he come suddenly and find you asleep" (Mk 13:35-36). "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left" (Lk 17:35). "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left" (:36). The wicked are taken and the righteous live. "Where the [dead] body is, there also will the vultures be gathered" (:37). "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1Co 15:52). "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1Th 4:16). "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" (:17).

First Resurrection

Near the end of the Book of Revelation John concludes "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection" (Rev 20:6). This is said just after John observes "I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True" (19:11). In addition, "the armies which are in heaven . . . were following Him on white horses" (:14). This is commonly referred to as Christ's second coming. However, didn't the "resurrection of the dead" (1Co 15:21) come first when Christ was "raised from the dead, [and became] the first fruits of those who are asleep" (:20)? Resurrection is said to be when "in Christ all shall be made alive" (:22). Is this instantaneous or sequential? Paul explains that it happens to "each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming" (:23). Therefore, the first resurrection can be defined as this period of time where certain related events transpire. However, others argue that there is only one, single resurrection. Daniel first recounted, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt" (Da 12:2). Jesus said, "All who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29). Paul explained to Felix, "There shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15). Jesus also cites "the resurrection of the righteous" (Lk 14:14).

Those who observe only one, official resurrection put forth the "sea" (Rev 20:13) and "Hades" (:13) giving up "the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds" (:13) as a general resurrection. This would agree with Jesus saying, "All who are in the tombs shall hear His voice" (Jn 5:28) because it is said that the graves "gave up their dead" (Rev 20:13). Jesus said, "I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:40) and Martha concurs saying, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (11:24). At the Second Coming, Christ "shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin" (Heb 9:28) "for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5). But Hebrews goes on to say it is for "those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28). However, they do not appear to be waiting in their graves. "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the

dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1Th 4:16-17). Paul also mentions "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1). Does he define this "coming" (:1) as the Second Coming? Jesus said that angels would "gather together His elect" (Mt 24:31) when "'they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds'" (:30). At this time everyone sees Christ's appearance and "in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives" (Zec 14:4). But only believers are "looking for the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) "who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) who will "see Him just as He is" (1Jn 3:3). Premillennialists see this as a separate resurrection they call the Rapture. Others may see it as the Day of Atonement being "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13).

Bodily Resurrection

We are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Ro 3:24) made possible by "redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul . . . which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us" (Heb 6:19-20). Therefore "by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light" (Ac 26:23). In the interim we are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23). We know that "we have been buried with Him through baptism into death" (6:4) since "the body is dead because of sin" (8:10). But we are not temporarily stuck depending upon our own devices in order to survive. "Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4). "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if Christ is in you . . . [and] the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (8:9-10). "The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1Co 15:45) for "just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so even the Son gives life to whom He wishes" (Jn 5:21). God will "give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who indwells you" (Ro 8:11). He has "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). "As He is so also are we in this world" (1Jn 4:17). "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Php 3:20). "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1).

It is natural to perceive resurrection as being spiritual. But is there more to look forward to? We know our body is "the earthly tent which is our house" (2Co 5:1) as Peter said "I am in this earthly dwelling" (2Pe 1:13). But we also know as Paul explained that "our house is torn down" (2Co 5:1) and Peter related it's "laying aside" (2Pe 1:14). If we were always kept guessing then it would cause anxiety. Therefore we are told "just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1Co 15:49). We believe "knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus" (2Co 4:14). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (5:1). "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be" (1Jn 3:2). He "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Php 3:21). Paul said "someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'" (1Co 15:35). "God gives it a body just as He wished" (:38). It is an "imperishable" (:42) "spiritual body" (:44). Adam and Eve made a

mistake in this regard when "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Ge 3:7). "We, having put it on, shall not be found naked" (2Co 5:3). It is accomplished "by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Php 3:21). "God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power" (1Co 6:14). "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead" (Jn 21:14). He told them, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Lk 24:39).