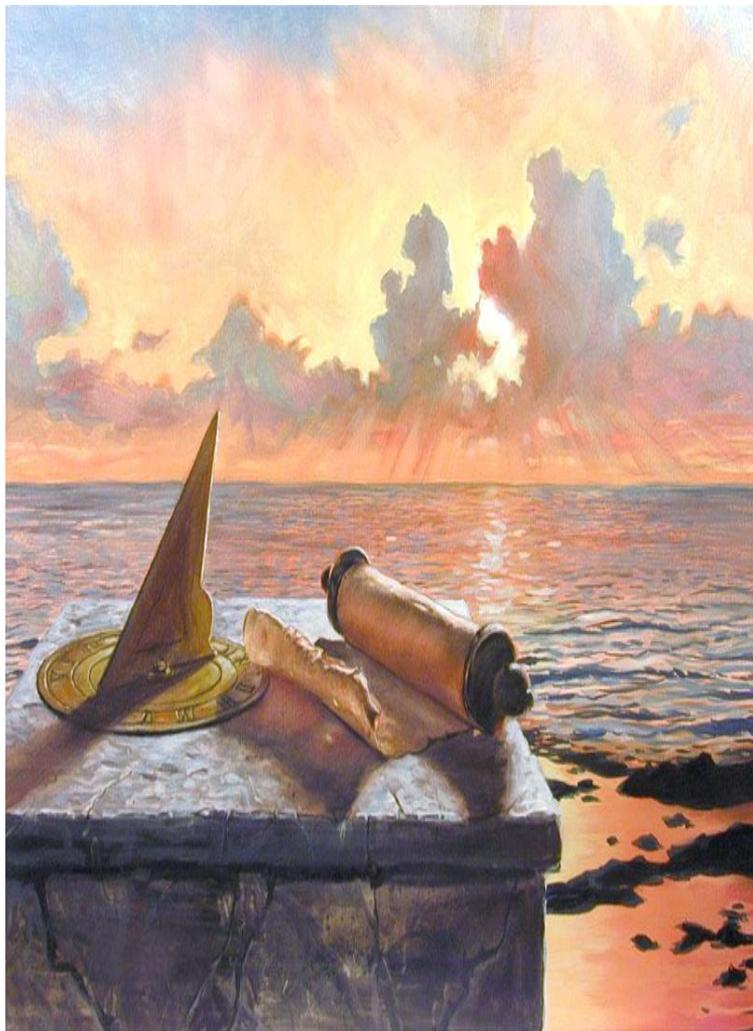


# When History Repeats Itself

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Sometimes, commonly held beliefs are true. Other times popular opinion is just plain wrong. With thousands of ideas and theories about the end of the earth, many Christians bitterly disagree with each other about the Appearing.

But what does the Bible say? Can we look to the past to find answers for the future? Will history repeat itself?

I was looking for a new place to live, as the dorms on campus were noisy and dirty. They were just an awful place to live, so you can imagine my excitement when I found the brochure for Executive Apartments. What a beautiful place, furnished apartments with leather furniture. The linens and dishes were included, too. Apparently, there was a sundeck where beautiful girls sunbathed all day, every day. I was only 18 years old, and I basically signed the lease without looking at the apartment.

When I got there, there was no big, beautiful sundeck. And there were no beautiful girls, just a big guy named Andy who liked to sit on the front porch in his undershirt. And the apartments were about the

dirtyest thing I had ever seen in my life. There was long black hair in the carpet and the leather furniture turned out to be leatherette. I remember looking out the window one afternoon, and I discovered a guy who was sleeping in the dumpster outside of my apartment.

"That poor guy," I thought, and then I turned around and looked at my apartment, and I thought, "You know, at least he's not paying for it!"

I don't know if you have ever made the awful discovery that reality doesn't match the picture you had in your mind, but it happens all the time, doesn't it? And sometimes, when you study the Bible, you discover that it doesn't exactly say what you always thought it did.

In a previous program, we studied five things we know for sure about the Second Coming of Christ. We discovered that Jesus will come back literally, in the flesh. And when He comes back, every eye will see Him, as we studied in Revelation one, verse seven.

And just like every eye will see Him, every ear will hear Him, because there will be a trumpet blast loud enough to wake the dead, along with a shout from the archangel. Then we saw that Christ's return will be stunningly glorious, and it will mark the end of earth's history. These are five things we know beyond the shadow of a doubt, straight from of the Word of God.

Nearly every time we study the Bible as sinful human beings, we have to change our minds about something, because we make many mistakes and assumptions that just aren't supported by Scripture. So the question I have is this: When you take what the Bible actually says about the Second Coming of Christ and compare it to some of the theories that are floating around out there, how do those theories stack up?

There are thousands of theories, but there is one that seems to come to the surface more than all the rest. And because it's so popular, and it has been the theme of so many books, I want to put it to the Bible test, just to be sure that we're on the right track.

This popular scenario says that there will be a seven-year burst of time just before the end of earth's history. At the beginning of that seven-year period of time, Jesus comes back for all the believers. Then after the church leaves, the antichrist appears at some point during the seven years. Some people say that he will appear in Jerusalem, and will allow the Jews to rebuild the temple.

But then, half way through the seven years he breaks his pact with Israel and launches a campaign of unbridled terror across the face of the earth.

The church, of course, is missing during this time, because Jesus has taken them to heaven. He snatched the church away, quickly, quietly and secretly. And then after the seven years, He comes back with all the believers and destroys the antichrist.

This is known as the two-phase coming of Christ. Two phases because Jesus first comes for the church, and then He comes back to destroy the antichrist. And while there are a number of

variations on this theme, it is probably the most popular scenario on the planet today.

But the question we need to ask is this: Is this theory a two-phase coming of Christ, with a secret first phase and a public second phase? Is that biblically accurate?

I have studied this quite a bit, and I've discovered that this theory is a biblical match on a number of fronts. First of all, this theory teaches us that time is running out more quickly than people think it is.

Secondly, it teaches us that there is a massive deception in the last days that leads people away from God.

Thirdly, this theory teaches that millions of people will be surprised by the return of Christ.

And fourthly, it teaches that it pays to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone for what we believe.

So, I think there is a lot about this theory that we can take to the bank. But I do have a few questions.

You know, Dr. Rowland V. Bingham was the editor of "The Evangelical Christian." One night as he was preparing his sermon, there was a knock at his study door. It was his wife, and she came into the room and said, "Rowland, I have to teach Sunday School tomorrow and our subject is the Second Coming of Christ. I want to show the kids how Jesus will come quietly for the church, and I'm wondering if you could tell me where to find it in the Bible."

"Oh, that's easy," he said, "just read 1 Thessalonians, chapter four."

Well, she looked it up, and here is what it said ([1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#)):

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Well, right away, she went back to her husband.

"Listen," she said, "I just read that passage you told me about, and I don't think it teaches a quiet coming of Christ at all. In fact, that's about the noisiest passage in all the Bible."

Well, Dr. Bingham tells us that he closed his study door, took out his Bible and studied the passage himself.

"The weeks that followed that innocent query, and the trouble into which it landed me, is a separate story. If you hold the theory of a secret rapture of the church, try out that simple question on yourself."

Well, what question is that? The question is: "Where exactly is it in the Bible?"

Now, that's a really good question. I have been studying the Bible for years, and I haven't seen it in there yet. But that's not the only question I have about a two-phase coming of Christ. This theory teaches that Jesus comes quietly for the church and then later, He comes back in glory.

But the Bible says in Revelation one, verse seven, that every eye sees Jesus when He comes. Now if every eye sees Jesus, including the wicked, how can His arrival be a secret?

Oh, but some people will say that every eye only includes the righteous. But that can't be, not according to the words of Jesus in [Matthew 24](#), verse 30, where he says ([Matthew 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."

The Bible says that all the tribes of the earth see Jesus and they mourn. This is obviously a reference to the wicked, because the righteous are glad to see Jesus come.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. That verse was talking about the second, glorious coming of Jesus, not that first secret coming where He comes for the church. Well, I could accept that,

except for one little problem. In the very next verse, here's what Jesus says ([Matthew 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."

According to the words of the Bible, the wicked mourn the coming of Christ at the very same time that He comes to get His church. Just a few verses later, Jesus adds just a little more detail ([Matthew 24:38, 39](#)):

"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, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Jesus said that if you want to know what the Second Coming is really going to be like, go back to the great flood of Noah. In that story, the people who

were ready and the people who were not ready experienced the flood at the very same moment.

And Jesus says, "When I come again, the wicked and the righteous will experience it at the very same moment."

The Bible simply does not describe two phases of the Second Coming. It only describes one. And still, there are more questions that we need to ask.

What about the antichrist? In the popular scenario that is sweeping the nation by storm, Jesus first comes to sneak away with the church, and then the antichrist appears during the final seven years of earth's history.

The problem with that understanding is that it doesn't match with something Paul says in his second letter to the Thessalonians. Listen to this ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#)):

"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,

who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

Paul says, point blank, that Jesus will not come back unless the antichrist first appears. A few verses later, he says that Jesus destroys the antichrist when He returns, and the context of the whole chapter indicates that it's talking about the moment Jesus returns for His church.

And here's another question: Will there really be a second chance after Jesus returns? In the most popular scenario today, some people are left behind to suffer the wrath of the antichrist. And during that last seven-year tribulation period, some of them turn to Jesus and are ready when He comes back again in glory.

But think about this carefully, because it's really saying that if you miss Jesus the first time when He comes secretly, you'll get another chance.

But if you read the Bible carefully, you quickly discover that can't possibly be true. [Revelation 22](#) and verse 11, for example, says ([Revelation 22:11, 12](#)):

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. 'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.'"

In no uncertain terms, Jesus says, "When I come back, that's it! No more chances. Every decision will have been made for all time."

If you haven't chosen Jesus by that point, it's simply too late. The Bible does not teach a second chance after Jesus comes for His church, and so it makes me question the accuracy of a theory that says that's true.

Let me share something with you. I know this scenario, a two-phased coming of Christ, is very

popular. I know it's very popular because I have seen it in hundreds, maybe thousands, of books.

The only book I can't seem to find it in is the Bible itself. And I'm not the only one who is asking the questions. A lot of Bible scholars, have had to change their minds, including guys like Charles Eerdman and Henry Frost:

"The doctrine seems to be founded upon a false interpretation. In the King James version of the opening verse of Second Thessalonians, chapter two, verse one."

"It might be held as truth if there were any Scripture to confirm it. But it may not be held in view of the fact that no Scripture even suggests such a process of events."

"No amount of explaining can make First Thessalonians four a secret rapture."

I would like to offer you a friendly little challenge. If you have always believed in a two-phase coming of Christ, where He comes secretly for His church

and then comes again in glory, check it out carefully and honestly with your Bible. See if it's really in there. I don't want you to take my word for it, I want you to study the Bible and see what it really says. And then you stick with your Bible, not with some preacher who has a convincing argument.

Well, there is just one more thing I think I ought to tell you about, and that's this: If the two-phase coming of Christ isn't in the Bible, where in the world does it come from? I think the answer might surprise you.

During the Protestant reformation, a lot of good Christians, both on the Protestant side of the equation and on the Catholic side of the equation, said that the structure of the church of the Middle Ages was becoming corrupt and making some big mistakes. They wanted to talk about it and do something about it. In fact, they believed that the problems they were facing were actually prophesied in the Bible.

But other people said, "Well, it's all kind of embarrassing, so why don't we just sweep it all under the rug and get on with life?"

Sometimes, it is hard for us to own up to our mistakes, and so many people went along with it. They just didn't want to admit that maybe the Bible was talking about them when it described certain problems in the church.

So some Christians said, "Hey, Bible prophecy can't possibly be talking about us and the mistakes we're making. So why don't we come up with an alternate theory as to why these prophecies are in the Bible in the first place?"

Now frankly, that is a pretty big mistake. I think that when we open the Bible and see that there are problems in our lives, we should just own up to it, go to God for forgiveness, and then get ourselves on the right track. But human nature being what it is, not everybody was willing to do that. So here is what several scholars said.

"Let's come up with an alternate theory of Bible prophecy." One of them, a man by the name of Alcazar, looked at all the prophecies of the Bible and said, "Why don't we just reinterpret this and move all these Bible prophecies to the ancient past."

Today, we call that theory "preterism," and it teaches that most of the book of Revelation has already been fulfilled in the ancient past. They say it all happened during the Roman persecution of Christians and that the Emperor Nero was probably the antichrist.

And if that's true, then the prophecies of the Bible couldn't possibly be pointing to the church of the Middle Ages. And that pretty much took care of the problem, because now all the sins mentioned in the book of Revelation only pertained to the people who lived in the first century after Jesus.

What is interesting is that the theory is still popular in some circles, and there are new books coming out that teach it, but it was completely made up in the Middle Ages to avoid dealing with the issues that Christians were facing at the time.

There was another scholar by the name of Ribera who came up with a different theory. He did just the opposite. He took the prophecies of the Bible and relegated them all to a seven-year period of history down at the end of time.

"All the prophecies," he said, "or at least most of them, haven't taken place yet. So the sins mentioned in the book of Revelation can't possibly be pointing to the church of the Middle Ages."

Now of course, he didn't call it "the church of the Middle Ages," but he was referring to the church during that period of time.

This theory is known as "futurism," and it is still with us today. It says that the prophets of the Old Testament couldn't see the Christian period at all. They could see the cross, and they could see the Second Coming, but the whole Christian era was hidden from them, as if it were in a valley between the mountain peaks of the cross and the Second Coming.

So, all the prophecies of the Bible have to apply either to Israel in the Old Testament, or Israel after the Second Coming of Jesus, in a special seven-year period of time at the end of history. And the whole reason for the theory was to make the Christian period disappear from the Bible so that they didn't have to deal with the issues of the day.

What is really sad is that even though it is a completely made-up theory, it has leapt into popular Christianity today, and it's the most popular theory of the Second Coming around, but you can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will never find it anywhere in God's Word.

Now, I know what some of you are asking. So what? What does it matter? It's just a theory, right? Well, I think it is more serious than that. What if we tell everybody that there is a second chance after Jesus comes, when in fact there is not?

Would it be dangerous to teach people that there is a second chance? Would they be tempted to wait and see what happens before they turn their lives over to

Christ? Would they take the Second Coming less seriously than they should?

You see, not only is this dangerous, but it is also unfair for the Christian church to be giving out the wrong information. Think about this very carefully. The Bible talks about overwhelming delusions and spiritual deceptions in the last days. Is it possible we could be wrong about the Second Coming? Is it possible that the most popular theory today is completely inaccurate?

You know, when Jesus came the first time, most of His people were wrong about it. They had the wrong idea of why He was coming and that is why most of them rejected the Messiah. Is it at all possible that many of us could also be wrong about His Second Coming? What if the whole world is gearing up to expect the wrong thing?

Listen, here is what it boils down to. In the end, Jesus comes back. And when He comes, according to [Revelation 19](#), He comes with a sword coming out of His mouth.

The Bible says in the book of Hebrews, chapter four, and again in the book of Ephesians, that that sword is the Word of God. When Jesus comes back there is only one thing that matters. It is not what this book said, or that book said. It is not what this preacher says, or that preacher says. The only thing that will matter is this: What does the Word of God say?

A good friend of mine told me about a cute little girl named Sara, who heard in class that there was going to be a contest, and that the teacher was going to give a prize for the tidiest desk.

"Oh boy," she thought, "I'm going to win that prize." And all the kids laughed at her.

"You can't win that prize, you're the dirtiest pig in this class. Your desk is always a mess. There's crumpled up paper shoved inside. There are dirt smudges on the top and you've always got stuff on the floor. You could never win that prize."

She said, "Yes I can, because the day before the teacher judges us I'm going to clean my desk."

That's when Bobby said, "What if the teacher judges you one day earlier?"

"Well," she said, "then I'll clean it up two days before."

"Well, what if the teacher comes around three days earlier?"

"Then I'll clean it up four days before."

And finally, out of exasperation, that little girl said, "You know what? I'm just going to keep it clean all the time."

Here is the message from Jesus to you. You don't know when He's coming, but you do know that when He comes, it is your last chance. Don't you think it's a good idea to keep your desk clean all the time?

**PRAYER:**

Father in heaven, we are excited to think that you are coming back for us. Today, we want to place our hope in the coming of Jesus. Teach us to prepare our lives now for Him to come. Cover us with the blood

of Christ. Forgive our sins, and Lord, we long to stand with you in glory. For we pray in today in Jesus' name, Amen.

### Scriptures Used in “When History Repeats Itself”

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

—[1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17](#)

"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."

—[Matthew 24:30](#)

"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."

—[Matthew 24:31](#)

"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, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

—[Matthew 24:38, 39](#)

"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, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

—[2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4](#)

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. 'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one

according to his work."

—[Revelation 22:11, 12](#)