

Expectations of Christ's Return

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Many Christians expect His Holiness Jesus Christ to return in a sudden, spectacular event in the sky, and some say the earth will be burned up. Will a rapture take place? Will Christians ascend to meet Him?

A thorough study of the Bible, on the other hand, shows His return is not likely going to be this way. Is it not our duty to study the passages that talk about Christ's return and evaluate for ourselves each phrase in the quotes commonly referred to about His return to determine what they really mean - whether they are about a literal event or are symbolic of a spiritual 'event'? Please continue reading to join me in this marvelous journey - our earnest search for truth!

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Many Christians expect Christ to return in the 'Last Day' in one or more of the following obvious, physical ways:

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The Basis of Christian Expectations:

These are the quotes people often refer to about Christ's return:

- A. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and 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 4:16-17)
- B. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:" (Mat 24:29)
- C. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (II Pet 3:10)

At the surface His Holiness Christ, Paul, and Peter all appear to describe a sudden, physical event, yet we must remember that the Bible is about spiritual conditions and personal transformation, so they are likely describing spiritual 'events'.

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:...But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God...Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor 2:7,10,13,14) (also: II Cor 3:13-16)

Now let's examine each of these characteristics of Christ's return by starting with:

The Last Day

Christians expect the return of Christ in the 'Last Day' or the "day of the Lord", the "latter days" (Dan 10:14) or the "time of the end" (Dan 8:17, 12:4, John 11:24). Some 'last day' prophecies refer to a time when there would be peace (Is.2:2-4) and Jews would return to their homeland a second time (Is 11:10-12; Luke 21:24, 27).

- A. “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even to the time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan 12:1-4) A ‘time of the end’ has both troubles, shame and contempt, but also spiritual resurrection, wisdom, righteousness, and an increase of knowledge.

- B. “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee,...because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44) Christ explains that His coming to the Jews at that time was the ‘Day of God’: “in this thy day”, “the time of thy visitation”, but they would be punished with destruction because “thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.” The physical destruction occurred in 70 AD as a result of the Jewish rebellion against Roman rule. Their spiritual ‘destruction’ had already encompassed them.
- C. “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,...And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:16-21)(also Joel 2:28-32) Because the ‘last days’ occurred at the time of Christ, then ‘last days’ must refer to the ending of the current spiritual dispensation of Moses and the beginning of a new one: “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:20)(also Mark 14:24, Mat 26:28) “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.” (Luke 5:37-38)(also Mark 2:22, Mat 9:17) References to ‘blood’, ‘fire’, and ‘the sun shall be turned into darkness’ were both physically and spiritually fulfilled during Christ’s mission.

* The word “afterward” in Joel 2:28 is replaced by Paul in the Acts with “in the last days”.

- D. “Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:” (John 11:24-25) Jesus here confirms that they were in the ‘last day’ at that time, and that it was a time of the spiritually dead coming back to life.
- E. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed

heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” (Heb 1:1-2) A ‘day of God’ is when God speaks to His people through His Chosen One.

- F. “Little children, it is the last time*: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time*.” (1 John 2:18) “And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” (Revelation 14:15) John used the same Greek word for ‘time’ in both of these references. The first quote was referring to the time in which he was writing, the second quote refers to a future time. Both are a ‘Day of God’

* “hour” in the NIV.

Judgment Day

For each of us there is a personal ‘Judgment Day’ when we die and God judges the sincerity of our faith in Him by our actions or ‘works’:

- A. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth;... and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh...Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it...Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 11:9-10, 12:7, 13-14) “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” (Hebrews 9:27)
- B. There is also a Judgement Day for society. Jesus was the Judge 2000 years ago: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:” (John 5:22) “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” John (12:31-33) Jesus is the “prince of this world”, and the people or society will be judged by their actions toward Him.
- C. God will judge mankind in the ‘last days’, which is now, since the Gospel was taught in all nations by 1845 (Mat 24:14). “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev14:6-7)

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Will He Come Suddenly?

- 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." (Mat 24:27) In Palestine storms move from west to east, just as they do in North America, so Christ cannot be referring to a physical lightning storm, but a very powerful source of spiritual light. This could be interpreted as Christ returning as suddenly and powerfully as lightning. It also could mean He will come from the east to Jerusalem, and His new teachings will enlighten the peoples of the world to the west. It could also mean His words will strike people's hearts like a lightning bolt when they hear them.
- B. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant..." (Mal 3:1) The first 'messenger' mentioned here is John the Baptist (Mat 11:10, 11), so the 'Lord' must be Jesus, because at the end of this passage Malachi says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:" (Mal 4:5). Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was Elijah (Mat 11:13-14). Jesus spent most of His mission outside of Jerusalem. When He did go there near the end of His mission, He created a sudden uproar and great displeasure among the religious leaders, including clearing the Temple of moneychangers and merchants. (Mat 21:1-17) Within weeks He claimed to be the "new testament [covenant]" (Mat 26:28), and was shockingly crucified. His coming was "sudden" for the spiritually unaware.
- C. Christ indicated there would be ample opportunity to hear His new message upon His return. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:26-30, also Mat 24:37-39) Note that Christ says "...in the days of the Son of man...", and "...in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Like in Noah and Lot's (Abraham's) times, apparently His return will not occur in just one 24-hour day, and that He would be among us, but not noticed, until the day He reveals Himself, just as Jesus did 2000 years ago at about the age of 30.

God equates "...Noah, Daniel, and Job..." (Eze 14:14), and Peter said Noah was a "...preacher of righteousness..." (II Pet 2:5). Christ refers to two events, generations apart, in which God punished the vast majority who rejected His teachings (from both Noah and Abraham). Therefore, Christ's return will likely be marked by a similar situation: He will teach God's new message for years, His teachings will be ignored by

most people, and calamity will follow this rejection. Christ is saying that history will repeat itself!

Christ also gave a warning of destruction to His own generation, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto...And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-21, 24).

This prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when Roman armies lead by Titus destroyed Jerusalem to put down an armed rebellion lead by the Zealots. The Jews had 40 years (a generation) to accept Christ. Most continued "...eating and drinking, marrying..." instead of investigating His claim, and suffered the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and death or slavery as a result. It is possible many of Christ's followers heeded His warnings and left Jerusalem beforehand.

If we again wait until a horrific calamity engulfs us before we earnestly search for Christ's return, we will probably be swallowed up in it before we can find Him. Only to these people will His return be a sudden realization.

D. "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Mat 24:43-44) (also at: Luke 12:39, 1 Th 5:2-7, Rev 3:3)

Most Christians interpret this to mean Christ will come suddenly, but Christ used the word 'thief', not 'robber'. A thief is a person who selects the house he will enter, plans the best day and time, then secretly or openly (as someone known but not suspected) enters the home, takes the valuables, and then leaves, usually without discovery of what is missing until days later. Christ also indicated the "house" would be "broken up". One possible interpretation of this analogy is that Christ (the unrecognized Thief) will come, enter the house (religion of God), take the valuables (the Divine Authority), and leave without the head of the household's (leaders of Christianity) awareness because they were sleeping (not spiritually awake). This event is not discovered until sunlight (the new teachings of God) again illumines the earth. (also see Rev.1:20 & 2:5, 17, 3:12) Since most Christians are expecting Christ to appear in the present or future, the "hour as ye think not" is the past! It is very likely that He has already returned but Christians have not learned about it and recognized it yet.

E. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come

to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." (Isa 60:1-3) This selection is about the return of Christ because the promises in verses 13, 18 and 21 of this same chapter were not fulfilled at His first coming. His return is described here as the rising of the sun to mid-day. Since the rising of the 'sun' of Christ over the world took hundreds of years, we should expect a similar rising of the 'sun' of the "**glory of the LORD**." Baha'u'llah's name translates as 'The Glory of God'. In the English translations of the Bible 'the LORD' replaces the actual name of God (Jehovah/Yahweh/I Am That Am) because "the name was regarded as ineffable, too sacred to be pronounced"¹

Therefore, Christ will not come 'suddenly' except to those who are spiritually asleep.

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Will He Descend from Heaven?

- A. "**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven...**" (1 Th 4:16). Although there are many uses of the word 'heaven' that refer to the physical sky, some clearly do not. Christ said He descended from heaven the first time He came: "**And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.**" (John 3:13, also 6:38) We all know He was born of Mary. Therefore His 'descent' was a spiritual condition or event, not a physical descent from the sky. Therefore His descent at His return will also be spiritual. Christ teaches in #1-C above that history repeats itself.

You can read more about Christ's descent at the discussion of 'The Resurrection of Christ' on the page "Bible Interpretation for Everyone"

- B. "**But God...made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:**" (Eph 2:4, 6) Here Paul indicates that he and other believers in Christ were currently in heaven, a spiritual condition, while they yet walked on this earth.
- C. "**Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said...Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?**" (Job 38:1, 33) The "ordinances" (customs, statutes) referred to here must be God's, and "heaven" His kingdom, not the sky.
- D. "**But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:**" (Mat 5:34)
- E. "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...**" (Rom 1:18) The 'heavens' mentioned in the quotes above (B, C, D, E) do not refer to the sky, but to God's kingdom.

- F. "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 so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) Since Christ's descent, resurrection and ascent are all spiritual conditions, then He will return in the same manner.

Therefore, it appears that when Christ returns there is NO scriptural evidence that His descent will be a physical event.

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Will He come on a cloud?

- A. "...and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Mat 24:30, Luke 21:27), and "Behold, he cometh with clouds;..." (Rev 1:7), and "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven..." (Dan 7:13) The phrase "clouds of heaven" means either the physical clouds in the sky, or the spiritual barriers that come between us and God. Since this is a Book of God, and about God, then there must be a spiritual meaning to this phrase. Since Christ's descent can only be a spiritual descent (see 'A' on p.7), then clouds here must represent a spiritual condition.
- B. "The LORD reigneth...Clouds and darkness are round about him..." (Psa 97:1-2) Here "clouds" represent our inability to perceive God.
- C. "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh...Presumptuous are they, selfwilled...These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." (2 Pet 2:10, 17) The Greek word translated as "mist" refers to "gloom (as shrouding like a cloud)"¹ A tempest is a storm, and storm clouds are dark. Therefore, those who "walk after the flesh" (are worldly) are spiritually 'in the dark', 'under a cloud', or 'in a fog'.
- D. "Thou [God] hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." (Lam 3:44) This may refer to a prayer not being answered in the way the supplicant desires. Water vapor in the air will never be a barrier to prayers, so this cloud may also represent the fact that God is unknowable.
- E. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9,11) Since Christ's resurrection was of the spirit, and not physical*, so then are His ascension and his later "coming" or descent going to be spiritual, as well as the "cloud" that hides Him.

*Click here to read about ['The Resurrection of Christ'](#) on the page "Bible Interpretation for Everyone"

- F. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain...clouds they are without water, carried about of winds;" (Jude 11-12)
- G. "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud" (Rev 10:1) Spirits or souls perceived by people have no physical body, but are sometimes represented as being in a cloud.

The quotes in A – G about clouds all refer to spiritual darkness, lack of understanding, people being separated from God, or the appearance of an angel.

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Will we hear trumpets and shouts?

- A. David used these words in praise of God: "God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet." (Psa 47:5)
- B. Regarding God's punishment (the Babylonian captivity) for their evil ways, Jeremiah prophecies "...The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout..." (Jer 25:30). The Hebrew word translated as 'shout' is also translated as 'testify' and 'announce'. In this case He promises to "roar" and "utter his voice" physically through the destruction of the Jewish nation (Jer. 25:31-38).
- C. "...watchman...blow the trumpet...So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." (Ezek 33:1-7) Since Ezekiel was the spiritual "watchman" for God to "blow the trumpet" "and warn" the people of Israel in his day, then John the Baptist was the watchman 'blowing the trumpet' at the time of Christ. "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Mat 11:10-14). It follows then, that someone would be sent by God before Christ's return. Therefore, we should look for a herald who has, or will prepare the people of the world for Christ's return.
- D. Christ promised: "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." (Mat 24:31) Since angels are spiritual beings, then a "a sound of a trumpet" must be the spiritually powerful, vibrating Call or Voice of God. Also, since "his elect" (the Jews) are already gathered together in Israel, this "trumpet" must have already 'sounded'. The 'elect' could also mean those who accept the return of Christ in his new name wherever they live around the world.
- E. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God..." (1 Th 4:16-17). The Greek word for 'shout'

refers to a 'cry of incitement', a 'command', and 'trump' was also translated as 'trumpet,' referring to a vibration or quivering.²

- F. The "voice of the archangel" (1 Th 4:16-17) refers to "...Michael the archangel,..." (Jude 1:9) who Daniel saw in his vision of the last days: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince..." (Dan 12:1), and who wins a spiritual war in heaven: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;..." (Rev 12:7)
- G. The Apostle John reported: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet..." (Rev 1:10), "...and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." (Rev. 4:1-2) Since John said the voices were like trumpets, and heaven and angels are spiritual, then the 'war' and 'voice' must also be spiritual metaphors.
- H. Christ explained: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (John 10:4) Therefore only those who have spiritual "ears to hear" (Mat 11:15) will recognize His voice and follow Him upon His return.

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Will the dead in Christ come back to life?

Click here to read the discussion of the 'Resurrection of the dead'

- A. "Buried with him [Christ] in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" (Col 2:12-13) Here Paul says the current believers had been 'buried' -to assimilate spiritually²- with Christ through their baptism (see also Rom 6:4), and were already raised up from the dead (spiritually alive) with Christ through faith and God's forgiveness, not when He returns.
- B. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col 3:1-4) Christ had already ascended to heaven and 'sits' with God, a spiritual condition not a physical place. Therefore Paul must be writing to people who are living, but spiritually dead. Here Paul says believers would "appear with" Christ, not ascend in the sky, and he may be referring to the appearance of spiritual "life" in their daily lives.

- C. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and 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 4:16-17) Since physical bodies do not resurrect, then this likely refers to the spiritually "dead in Christ". These may be those who do not believe in Him or are sinners, yet would be the first to believe in Him when He returns. The 'Christians' will apparently recognize Him and believe in Him after the spiritually 'dead' have come back to spiritual life. This is exactly what happened during and after Christ's first coming. The Jews who were steadfast in their belief in Moses, especially the learned, rejected Christ. Those who were more apt to accept Him as their Lord had pure and open hearts, were sinners (spiritually dead), or who were not Jews (Gentiles).

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Will Christians ascend into the sky? Will the Rapture happen?

- A. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and 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 4:16-17) Since 'descent' is a spiritual condition or event (p.7) and 'clouds' are a spiritual condition (p.8), then the other parts of this passage must be about spiritual conditions. Thus, the "dead in Christ" must refer to those who are not spiritually alive in their belief in Christ, and to "rise" may refer to ascending spiritually toward God.
- B. Continuing from above: "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" The Greek word translated as "caught" is used four other times in the New Testament. In the Acts it appears to refer to inspiration or spiritual joy after baptism of a new believer: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea." (Acts 8:39-40) In another instance Paul wrote: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago...such an one caught up to the third heaven...How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [right]² for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4) This appears to be a spiritual condition of a living person. In Revelation John related: "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." (Rev 12:5) Since Revelation is a vision by John while he was "in the spirit" (Rev 1:10, 4:2), everything he saw was symbolic of a spiritual condition or event. Therefore, "caught up" is also a spiritual condition.

C. Continuing: "Then we which are alive and remain shall...meet the Lord in the air..." (1 Th 4:17) Although the Greek word used here for 'air' refers to the physical air around us², the same word is also used in The Revelation of St. John the Divine where he is describing a spiritual vision of symbolic meanings, not physical events: "And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." (Rev 9:2), and "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air..." (Rev 16:17) Since there is no such physical thing as a 'bottomless pit', and angels are not physical beings, 'air', as used by both John and Paul, probably is referring to heaven, the spiritual condition of nearness to God. As used by John, the heaven of religion was clouded by evil (smoke).

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Will every eye see Him?

- A. "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:6) Here John the Baptist is repeating Isaiah's prophecy (40:4-5) about the revelation of Christ, the Messiah. There is no record in or outside of the Bible that all people physically saw "salvation" or saw Christ during His lifetime on earth. It is also physically (literally) impossible. To believe and have trust in God is 'salvation'. Therefore to "see" is a spiritual condition of recognition and knowing about God. Today we use the phrase 'I see' when we mean 'I understand'. Truly, all people who saw Christ or heard His message have had the opportunity to see salvation.
- B. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him..." (Rev 1:7) The Roman soldiers who physically pierced Christ have died long ago. Therefore "they" who "pierced him" must be interpreted spiritually, such as being the return of the station of those who opposed Christ's Faith or His followers 2000 years ago. One cannot, with a clear conscience, interpret one phrase of a Bible statement literally and another phrase figuratively. Therefore, there must be a spiritual meaning to the phrases "all flesh shall see", "he cometh with clouds", and "every eye shall see him".
- C. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears, for they hear." (Mat 13:15-16) Christ is clearly referring to those with spiritual perception. Only people like these will "see" and recognize Christ when He returns, especially since He will have a new Name.

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Will the sun and moon be darkened, and the stars fall?

- A. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:" (Mat 24:29) Science has proven that physical stars are actually huge atomic furnaces, millions of times the size of the earth, and millions of light years away. None, not even our own Sun, could "fall" to the earth.
- B. "Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female...And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them..." (Deu 4:16,19, also Deu 17:3) Here "graven image", "figure", and the "sun, and the moon" are references to worshiping false 'gods'. See also (2 Ki 23:5) At that time many people did worship idols and the sun and moon. Besides the stars and planets, the "host of heaven" could be angels, or the deceased.
- C. "And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven." (2 Ki 23:5)
- D. "If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other." (Eccl 6:3-5) "Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun." (Eccl 7:11) Here "sun" appears to represent the knowledge of God and our spiritual reality, and "darkness" our ignorance of both. The 'sun' of the knowledge of God is found by accepting His Divine Messengers, like Moses and Christ. They are the spiritual 'suns' of mankind, shedding the light of Truth on all created things.
- E. "Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday....She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD." (Jer 15:8-9) (This is during the Babylonian captivity) To have "given up the ghost; her sun is gone down" are two ways of describing the dark grief in the loss of a family member, and sometimes loss of spirit and faith during that time. "She" may also refer to the nation of Judah.
- F. "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven

and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." (Isa 13:9-10) Chapter 13 appears to be about the Babylon of Isaiah's time (13:1, 17, 19), yet Christ essentially quotes this statement of Isaiah when He speaks about His own return (in 'A' above, Mat 24:29). Because the city of Babylon does not now exist, this passage must be symbolic of spiritual conditions. The darkened "sun" may refer to people's ignorance, lack of faith in, or rejection of God's Divine Messengers and Their teachings, the lack "moon" light may represent disobedience to His laws, and "stars of heaven" may mean the loss of spiritual power by the priesthood.

- G. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come." (Joel 2:28-31) This passage is quoted in The Acts of the Apostles (2:17-21), as having been fulfilled by the disciples when they spoke in tongues (other languages) (Acts 2:1-16). Since the 'day of the LORD' had already come with Christ's advent, the darkened sun and moon had occurred before Christ revealed Himself. There is no physical event like this recorded in scripture or historical records, so these must be symbols of darkened spiritual condition.
- H. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isa 24:23) This passage may be referring to either Christ's first coming or His return. The personification of the moon and sun show symbolic intent in their mention, therefore "mount Zion" and "Jerusalem" are also symbolic. Here the "sun" may be the past Manifestation of God (Moses or Jesus). The "moon" could be their apostles and saints. Their shame may be their follower's lack of faith, or their rejection of the Lord of Hosts (Christ or His return) when He reveals His sacred Mission. "Sun" may also refer to the leader(s) of the predominant Faiths, and the moon the believers.
- I. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isa 60:19-21) See 'The Revelations of St. John the Divine' (21:23-25) for a very similar statement about the 'Last Day', the return of Christ. Since 'The Revelations' is a vision with numerous symbols, then Isaiah's statement must also be symbolic. That the "sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy

moon withdraw itself" clearly indicates that 'sun' and 'moon' are symbolic of a spiritual condition. This explains that the other statements of the sun and moon being darkened refer to them 'setting', that the 'sun' of faith in Moses and Christ would 'set' in the hearts of the people. It also says that when He returns in His glory, faith in God will never again die out like it has to the followers of past Faiths.

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Will the powers of heaven be shaken?

- A. "...I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place..." (Isa 13:13) Isaiah says this about the future fall of Babylon to the Medes (see H above) (see also Psalm 47) This appears to be a symbolic reference.
- B. "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts...and in this place will I give peace..." and "I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen..." (Hag 2:6-7, 9, 21-22) Haggai says this about the coming of Christ. It is unclear if it is about His first or second Manifestations, or both. The word 'shake' appears to be symbolic of spiritual and social disruption that ushers in peace.
- C. Christ says essentially the same thing about His return, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days...the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn..." (Mat 24:29-30) Considering all three quotes, they must refer to a weakened spiritual condition. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines the Greek words for 'powers' and 'heavens' as we currently use them, but also defines 'heaven' as "specially the Gospel (Christianity)".² The author also defines the Greek word for 'shaken' as "to waver, i.e. agitate, rock, topple, or (by implication) destroy." Therefore, it may well be the powers (authority) of Christianity that are shaken or toppled.

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Will the earth be burned up?

- A. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet 3:10) and "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness." (2 Pet 3:13) Since the sky cannot "pass away", then every word in this sentence is symbolic. Thus, "heavens" may refer to our spiritual condition or to religion. The "elements shall melt with fervent heat" may signify everything we know and believe may be abolished, abandoned or found erroneous. The **"earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."** likely refers to the total destruction of the current system – the social order of Kings and priests, etc. The "new heavens and new earth" probably refer to new truths and a new social order that will be established. The word "new" refers to "especially in freshness"².

- B. **"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world...But now, after that ye have known God...how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"** (Gal 4:3,9) "Elements" refers to something orderly in arrangement and is sometimes translated as 'principles', and "world", Greek 'kosmos', refers to the "orderly arrangement" of its inhabitants². The principles or elements of an unbelieving mankind, and their works, are what will 'burn up', not the earth.
- C. **"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."** (Mat 13:38-43) This is a parable (symbolic story) of the end of the Christian age. In **"the field is the world"** Matthew uses the word 'kosmos', translated as 'world', that refers to the "orderly arrangement"² of society. In **"end of this world"**, used two times, Matthew uses the word 'aion' which refers to a "a Messianic period"². Therefore, the "furnace of fire" may be symbolic of the anguish of the "children of the wicked one". That the righteous will "shine forth" indicates that those who recognize Christ at his return will be upright believers, and that life will continue on earth.
- D. **"...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."** (Mat 6:9-10) Christ is clearly praying here that God's will be established on earth, not the end of the earth and civilization.

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Conclusions:

There appears to be no Scriptural evidence that Christ's return will be substantially different from His first appearance:

- * He will NOT appear suddenly, except to those who are spiritually asleep.
- * He will NOT physically descend from the sky. His will be a spiritual descent.
- * He will NOT descend upon clouds in the sky, but will descend spiritually upon the ignorance and misbeliefs that come between us and God.
- * Trumpets and shouts will NOT be heard, but a new 'Voice' will be spoken.
- * The physically dead will NOT come back to life, but the spiritually dead will.
- * Christians will NOT ascend into the sky, but will recognize Christ's return after the non-believers and spiritually dead do.
- * Not every eye will see (recognize) Him, but those with spiritual perception will.
- * The physical sun and moon will NOT be darkened and the stars will NOT fall physically upon the earth, but the light of religion will go out, and the laws will not be obeyed, and the light of faith in God will be darkened.
- * The powers of heaven (religion) will be shaken, likely that of Christianity.
- * The earth will NOT be burned up physically, but the principles of an unbelieving mankind will.

So how will Christ return?

Christ could return, or could already have returned, with a new name, very much like He came the first time: born to a mother, a child with amazing knowledge, demonstrating the boundless love of God, fulfilling prophecies in spiritual ways, rebuking the leaders of religion, upholding past spiritual teachings, changing outdated social laws, revealing new spiritual truths (fruits), suffering due to opposition, sacrificing His/Her life for the Cause of God, living the virtues that God asks us to have, and promising to come again in the future!

Now it is your turn to investigate...please go to the page: [Could Bahá'u'lláh Be Christ's Return?!!](#), or to [“Have the Prophecies of the Bible been Fulfilled?”](#)

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References:

¹ <https://elijah.com/commentary-on-bible-prefaces/>

² Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, James Strong, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee.

Go to web sites about the Bahá'í Faith