

The Secret Coming & Revelation of the Rapture

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One day George MacDonald, the great Scottish preacher and writer, was talking with his son. The conversation turned to the subject of Heaven and the end of all hardships that we now face on earth. "It seems too good to be true," the son said at one point. A smile crossed MacDonald's whiskered face. "Nay," he replied, "It is just so good it must be true!" My friend, when we think about Heaven and the glories that await believers in Christ we should be overwhelmed with the grandeur, unspeakable blessings, and the blessings that await us. The half has not been told! Ladies and gentlemen, one thing is certain. Jesus is coming again and we are going back to Heaven to live with Him, so that we can experience the wonder of this glorious place and our eternal dwelling house that the Father has prepared for us (John 14:1-3). We often sing:

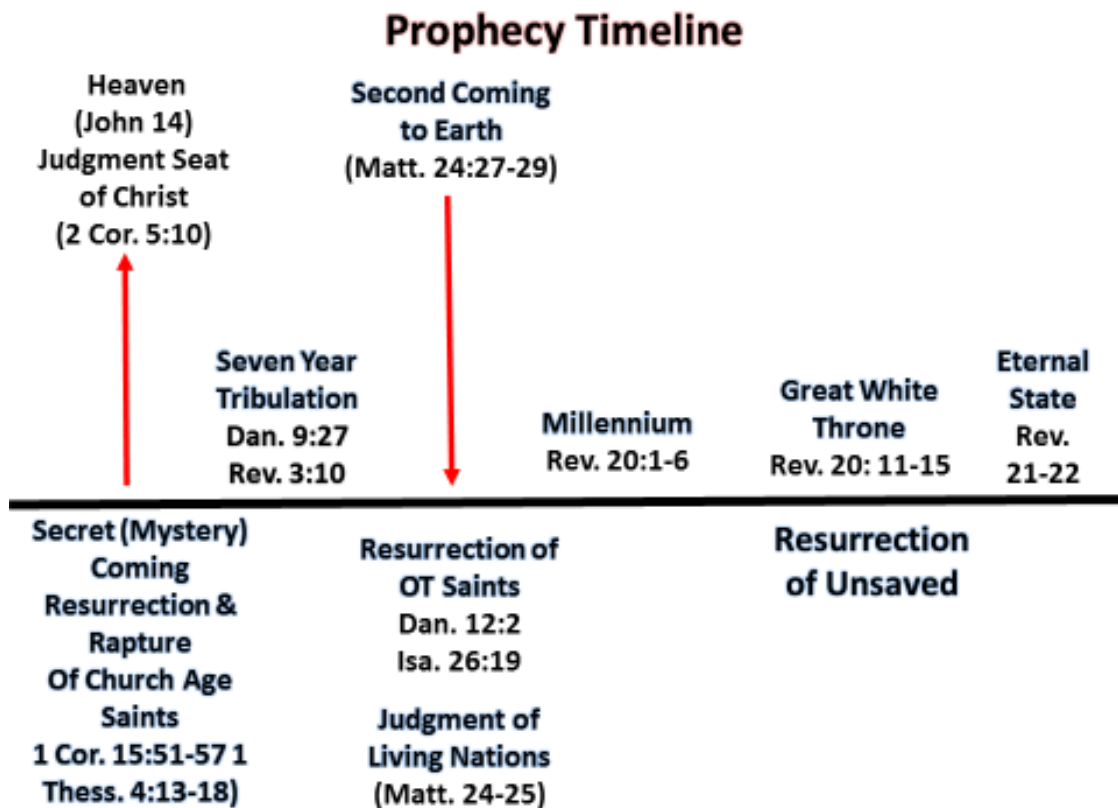
"Coming again, Coming again,
Maybe morning, maybe noon,
Maybe evening and maybe soon!
Coming again, Coming again,
O what a wonderful day it will be.
Jesus is coming again!"

Sir Isaac Newton wrote: (1647-1727)

"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition."

We are dispensational in our eschatology. This means that we insist on the literal interpretation of Scripture and see a Biblical distinction between certain future events. There are two separate returns of Christ, three separate resurrections (New

Testament, Old Testament saints, unbelievers) and three different locations that follow the resurrections (saints in Heaven, saints on Earth, the unsaved in the Lake of Fire). This study focuses on the revelation that God gave to Paul regarding the Secret Coming of Christ for His Church Age saints and the various “mystery” events that surround this return of Christ. As we will see in this study, the secret coming of Christ is based upon the mystery teaching taught by Paul and it was introduced by Christ Himself. It is a distinct and separate coming that was NOT taught in the Old Testament but revealed in the New Testament by Christ and the apostles. Here is a simple timeline that helps us see what we are studying about.



The Old Testament only revealed God’s plan for Christ’s Second Coming to earth. However, the New Testament and progressive revelation reveals God’s plan for His Son to return for a group of people, His Church, the New Testament Bride, before His Second Coming to earth. God has chosen to reveal some new truth in the New Testament Scriptures regarding His prophetic plan for Christ’s return or coming. Dispensationalism (making Biblical distinctions throughout history and prophecy) unravels the clear understanding and distinction between God’s changing program of the ages, God’s people, and the prophetic Scriptures.

I have discovered that those who reject God's stewardship teachings and distinctions throughout the Bible (Dispensationalism) become very confused regarding eschatology and end time events. As a result, they avoid talking about prophecy and End Time events. But we need not be confused about the future if we accept God's Word for what it teaches. God works differently through the ages of time. He progressively reveals His plans and can add to them or change them in any way He sees fit. We must let God be God and stop believing those who reject the clear and literal revelation of Bible prophecy. You should attend a church that believes the Bible in the area of eschatology or the doctrine of future things. Many today are hijacking the Biblical teaching of Christ's secret coming, as taught in the New Testament, along with the literal events associated with planet earth, such as a literal Tribulation Period, Antichrist, future for the nation of Israel, and the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom.

There is a Secret Coming of Christ for His Church Age saints.

This truth is revealed by Christ and Paul.

I. Jesus introduces the Secret Coming.

In John 14, Jesus revealed a secret about His coming for Church Age saints. What a joy and encouragement it must have been to them to hear this message about a secret return for them which was not foretold or prophesied about in the Old Testament.

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled (the CONSOLATION of Christ): ye believe in God, believe also in me (the DEITY of Christ). In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (the PROMISE of Christ – He is today preparing for us a House in the heavenly Jerusalem). And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again (the SECRET COMING of Christ for His Church – first mentioned here – Note that Jesus does not say that He would come again and again and again as those try to teach who reject the teaching of the Rapture, and who try and make this passage to mean the time when Christ individually comes for His saints when they die – to take them back to Heaven – this

is NOT talking about His saints dying but His saints flying out of this world to meet Him at His return for them), and receive you unto myself (the event of the Rapture – catching away His Church); that where I am (Heaven), *there ye may be also*” (Heaven).



**Secret Coming in Rapture
means the Church is taken to
Heaven BEFORE the
Second Coming.**

It was Jesus Himself who introduces this new and secret teaching about taking His saints back to Heaven. The secret coming of Christ has to do with Christ’s return for His Church Age saints, who will be transported back to Heaven and live with Him in the Father’s House, instead of immediately reigning with Him on earth. This is what Jesus is sharing

to His followers who would become part of the Church Age. What Jesus was talking about here is a totally distinct and separate coming from His return to earth in His Second Coming or Second Advent. In the Second Coming of Christ to earth, there is no mention of Him returning to Heaven with His people, but immediately descending to earth and ruling on David’s throne in Jerusalem.

Let’s get our eschatology straight! We can’t go to Heaven to dwell with Christ (“where I am” – John 14:3) and come back to the earth at the same time. There is a distinct time interval involved here. This means the secret coming (the Rapture) and Second coming are separate events. There **MUST** be a secret return of Jesus Christ that is designed to take the saints back to Heaven, where they can safely dwell with Christ and the Father, during the time when God’s judgment is falling on planet earth. It’s a secret coming that will precede Christ’s Second Coming to earth by seven years (Dan. 9:27).

So what Jesus introduced here was a new and secret teaching not previously known to Old Testament saints. It was a teaching specifically for you and me who are part of His Church today. Jesus lets us in on the new teaching and truth about His secret coming for Church Age saints.

The mystery teaching (sacred secret) of the Church's rapture and resurrection BEFORE the Second Coming results in a different destination or location. Both Jesus and Paul taught that we will meet the Lord in the air (not on earth) and we will then be transported to the Father's House (John 14).

The phrases "My Father's house" and "where I am" clearly refer to Heaven. Jesus promised to take believers back to Heaven with Him when He returns to gather His people. Again, this means there must be a time interval between Christ's return to gather His people (the secret coming) and His return to earth to establish the millennial kingdom (the Second Coming). In short, this cannot be the same event as the Second Coming of Christ to earth as revealed in the Old Testament. The contrasting elements cannot be merged into a single event. Christ cannot return to Heaven for His saints and return to earth with His saints at the same time! This tells us that the return of Christ has two distinct phases.

Those who reject the teaching of the Secret Coming of Christ in the Rapture try to make this text say that this is a reference to Christ's coming for His people (saints) when they die. According to this view, Christ comes back for His saints every time they die and take them to Heaven. This is sometimes defined as "the death-of-the-believer view" of John 14. Of course, this is a false view that involves millions of comings of Christ every time a believer dies. This is a severe case of eisegesis of the Bible – reading something into the text that is not there! Jesus simply said, "I will come again" (one specific coming) – not again and again and again when people die! Furthermore, Luke 16:22 states that it is the angels who escort believers into the next life – not Christ.

Others think this refers to Christ returning to His disciples after His resurrection to show Himself in the resurrection appearances. But this cannot be based upon what Jesus said in John 14:3 – "If I go and prepare a place for you." Of course, this refers to Christ's ascension and return to Heaven – not His return after His resurrection to the disciples. Jesus did not go to prepare a place in Heaven following His resurrection. This could only take place after His ascension into Heaven. Jesus also said that He would "come again" which means that His future coming would be similar to His first coming. In His first coming Jesus came from Heaven and not from

the realm of death. Therefore, the coming of Jesus for His disciples does not refer to His coming to meet them after His resurrection.

Others think this refers to Christ's coming at Pentecost in the person of the Holy Spirit. However, this cannot be the case since at Pentecost no believers were taken from earth ("and receive you unto myself" – John 14:3). None of these views, which try to disregard the Rapture of the church, can be supported from this text. The text is a clear revelation and new revelation of Christ's Secret Coming which precedes the Second Coming to earth by seven years.

Many other New Testament passages refer to Christ's Secret Coming and the believer's entrance into Heaven at this coming.

1 Thessalonians 5:10

"Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

2 Thessalonians 2:1

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him."

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

"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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

I find comfort knowing that Jesus is coming back to take me back to Heaven so I can live with Him! We are going to be forever be with the Lord in Heaven and live with Him in the place that He has prepared for us. All of these verses certainly imply that we will be gathered together with Christ and live with Him in the place that He has prepared for us – Heaven.

Philippians 3:20-21

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto

his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Paul is saying that his citizenship is in Heaven and this is where He is going when Jesus comes back to take His Church out of this world.

The Old Testament revealed that God’s saints at the Second Coming would be destined to immediately reign with Christ on earth. They would not enter Heaven at the Second Coming.

A Secret Return
Old Testament Revealed
Christ’s return to earth
(Second Coming)
New Testament Revealed
Christ’s return to Heaven
(Secret Coming)

Daniel 7:13

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven (*the Second Coming*), and came to the Ancient of days (*the Heavenly Father*), and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom (*the Millennium of Revelation 20 which is the first phase of Christ’s earthly rule,*

the time when Christ takes back the earth “For he must reign, till he that put all enemies under his feet” - 1 Cor. 15:25), that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion (*the 1,000 years merges into the Eternal Kingdom and Eternal State*), which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.”

Daniel 7:18

“But the saints (*Jewish saints*) of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”

Daniel 7:22

“Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints (*Jewish saints*) of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (*Millennial Kingdom*).”

Daniel 7:27

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven (the earthly Millennium), shall be given to the people of the saints (Jewish saints) of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom (*the Millennium merges into the Eternal Kingdom*), and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

Zechariah 14:9

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

The Old Testament viewed Christ’s Second Coming as returning to earth to rule and reign with His Jewish saints. As we focus on the New Testament teaching for the Church (both Jew and Gentile), we discover that the New Testament revelation about Christ’s Secret Coming reveals that Church Age saints will NOT immediately rule with Christ on earth, but be taken back to Heaven to live with Christ for seven years (the period of time of the Tribulation Period).

John 14:2-3 against states:

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.”

The phrases “My Father’s house” and “where I am” clearly refers to Heaven. Jesus promised to take believers back to Heaven with Him when He returns to gather His Church Age saints in the Secret Coming which was not foretold in the Old Testament. Where is Christ? Heaven! He is living in the Father’s House and when He returns for His disciples they will be immediately taken back to Heaven with Him – not to earth. Jesus revealed for the first time that He would return from Heaven to transport a group of saints back to the Father’s House.

Yes, Jesus that Church Age saints are going directly to Heaven when He returns for them. We are not returning to earth right away as some teach. Instead, Christ and the epistles speak about a secret coming not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ is going to return for a group of saints and escort them

back to Heaven to live with Him, prior to His return to earth. There would be a secret coming before His Second Coming to earth! In the secret coming (return) Jesus will transport a different group of people (the Church Age saints) back to Heaven so they can live with Him. This is the secret revelation that Jesus shared in John 14. This is a new and distinct truth that Jesus was revealing regarding His return.



Some teach that when Jesus returns His saints are going to do a great big U-turn in the sky and immediately come back to earth. The claim is made that we will be raptured (taken up) and then immediately return with Christ to earth. This simply cannot be true based upon what Christ taught in John 14. Somehow they put the two separate events of Christ’s coming (Rapture and Second Coming) together. But the secret truth related to Christ’s coming (the Rapture), which is revealed in John 14:3 and other verses, debunks such a theory as this. Christ explains that

He will transport His disciples (New Testament saints) back to the place that the Father has prepared for them (John 14:1-3). The context is referring to the Father’s house in Heaven - not to the earth.

Jesus is going to return FOR His saints (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-56) and take them back to Heaven to live with Him (John 14:1-3; Phil. 3:20) for seven years (Dan. 9:27 – “one week”) which is the time of the Tribulation Period over the earth. After this intermission of time He will then return to earth WITH His saints (Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16) in His Second Coming to rule and reign.

Christ Returns
FOR
His Saints
(Secret Coming)

Christ Returns
WITH
His Saints
(Second Coming)

Jesus introduced this Secret Coming to us in John 14. The Secret Coming can be defined as the Rapture of the Church which is a word taken from how God’s living saints will be “caught up” (harpadzo = 1 Thess. 4:17) when Jesus returns for His Church saints. This word describes how the LIVING saints will be raptured into the air, transformed, and be taken back to Heaven and not to earth.

Some dispensational teachers view Christ's Second Coming in two phases, the Rapture phase of Christ's Second Coming when He reveals Himself to only the Church, and then the Revelation phase of Christ's Second Coming when He returns to earth and reveals Himself as King to all people living on earth. I have no bones to pick with them but I want to get more specific about this because I think the Bible is clear on this matter. I choose NOT to view the Second Coming in two phases (the Rapture and Christ's Return to earth). This is because the actual Second Coming of Christ refers His return to planet earth to rule and reign as the King and was predicted and known about in the Old Testament. I see in Scripture a separate and distinct return of Christ that was never predicted in the Old Testament and which has nothing to do with Christ's actual Second Coming to earth. If we keep the Rapture totally separate from the Old Testament prediction of Christ's Second Coming to earth, I believe it makes better sense and even Scriptural sense.

Instead of viewing the Rapture as being PART of the Second Coming, which refers to the time when Christ returns to earth, John 14 and the epistles teach that the Rapture is a SEPARATE and STAND ALONE event from the Second Coming – the time when Christ returns to earth. The Rapture and Second Coming are two different events happening at two different times.

The Old Testament portrayed Christ's Second Coming as pertaining to Christ's rule on earth with His saints but the New Testament portrays Christ's Secret Coming as taking His saints back to Heaven to live with Him in the Father's House. You see, the Old Testament spoke ONLY of Christ's first coming and His Second Coming – many times in the same verse. Christ's first coming (His birth and entrance into the world) on earth would eventually be followed by Christ's Second Coming on earth (His return to earth as the King). But there was NEVER ANY MENION of a secret coming of Christ for His Church Age saints which occurs between His first coming (incarnation) and Second Coming (Millennium).

Christ's Coming in Two Separate Events

The Secret Coming = New Testament Revelation

Rapture of Church Age Saints to Heaven
(John 14:1-3)

The Second Coming = Old Testament Revelation

Revelation to Earth as the King
(Revelation 19)

Let me illustrate from some Scriptures why the O.T. saints did not know about the Rapture teaching.

No Rapture to Heaven

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given (**first coming = Christmas**): and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (**Second Coming = Conquering King and Kingdom**).

Isaiah 61:1-2: No Rapture to Heaven

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD (**first coming**), and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn (**Second Coming**). **No mention of the Secret Coming!**

In the Old Testament revelation there is no mention of Christ coming to take His Church back to Heaven with Him as Jesus taught in John 14. This is because these are two separate events. The Secret Coming has nothing to do with the Second Coming. Therefore, they should remain totally separate. In other words, the Second Coming is not divided in two phases. The Second Coming occurs after the Secret Coming (The Rapture).



Father's House (John 14)

Secret Coming or Rapture



Second Coming

The Second Coming was ALWAYS viewed from an Old Testament perspective in conjunction with Christ's return to planet earth to rule as King. In other words, the

Messiah (Jesus) would return to the same place He left (planet earth) and rule as Israel’s King. Therefore, the Second Coming was always viewed as EARTHLY.

Acts 1:11-12

“...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. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.”

These verses are not referring to the Rapture but the Second Coming to EARTH. Many fail to see that Jesus was talking about returning to the Mount of Olives in Acts 1 which is a clear reference to His Second Coming as predicted by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah.

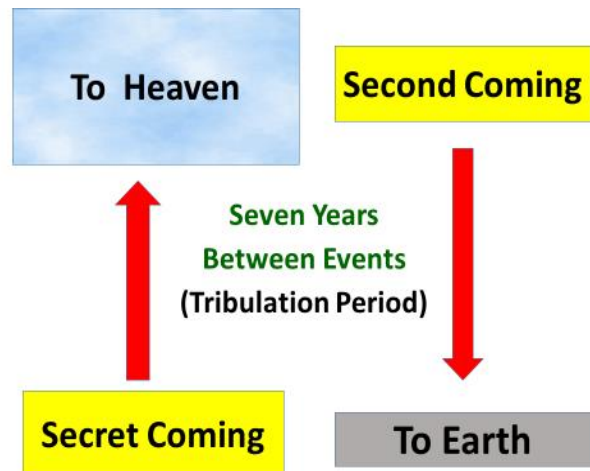
“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (the SECOND COMING) – Zechariah 14:4



Zechariah 14:4

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (the Second Coming), which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

We CANNOT harmonize the Rapture passages with the Second Coming passages. I believe the Scripture is demanding that we recognize there are two separate events associated with Christ’s coming. At the Rapture, Christ comes for His Church and we are caught up to meet Him in the air (John 14). Later, at His Second Coming, Christ descends to the



Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where He conquers His enemies and then begins to rule (Zech. 14).

Once again, the Second Coming of Christ is Old Testament revelation or teaching that has to do with Christ's return to the EARTH. It refers to the time when Christ returns to the same place where He left the earth (Mount of Olives). But as we are about to see, there was another distinct and separate coming or return of Christ predicted only for Church Age saints (you and me living today!) which had nothing to do with Messiah's Second Coming to earth. Rather, it had to do with Christ's coming or return in the AIR to take away His Bride (New Testament Church) and transport them back to Heaven (John 14:1-3).

I call this a *stand-alone* event separate the Second Coming because John 14 and the church epistles reveal this return of Christ as a "secret" teaching or revelation not previously taught in the Old Testament. Therefore, it has NOTHING to do with Christ's Second Coming to earth since this was Old Testament teaching. The Rapture is totally DIFFERENT and DISTINCT from the teaching about Christ's Second Coming to earth.

So, Jesus introduces the Secret Coming to His disciples. But we not come to Pauline Theology.

II. Paul details the Secret Coming.

What Jesus introduced, Paul taught in greater detail.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (*all Church Age saints*), In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (*the dead Church Age saints will be resurrected*), and we shall be changed (*the living Church Age saints will be instantaneously changed without dying*). For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?"

Paul teaches specifically about the mystery coming of Christ. He says that "we shall all be changed." This should be a sign placed above the entrance to the church nursery! Just kidding! Yes, "we" (Church Age saints) will all be changed or transformed. None of us will be left out of this wonderful time of transformation. Both the living and dead saints of the Church Age will be "changed" ("made different," "to cause one thing to cease and another take its place"). This speaks of receiving our transformed, glorified, new, and eternal body.

Changed in a moment! Think of it! Church Age saints are going to receive a glorified body that reflects the resurrection and transformed body of Christ (Phil. 3:20-21). This means there will be no more bifocals, trifocals, hearing aids, or heart monitors. There will be no more cancer, heart problems, no more pain and disease in our glorified bodies. And best of all, there will be no more sin! This will be a perfect body that we are going to receive at the Rapture. It will be painless, tearless, sinless, and ceaseless (eternal) body.

Most of us agree that our body needs a radical change! Many of us suffer from physical ailments and difficulties that will never go away. Folks, they are here to stay until we receive this radical transformation or change that is promised when Jesus secretly returns for His Church. A senior citizen in Indiana reports, "I now know that I'm getting old. I took my first airplane flight yesterday and the stewardess asked if I wanted coffee, tea or Geritol." When Jesus returns our health problems, heart problems, hearing problems, and hellish inclinations to sin will suddenly vanish away and we will receive a new glorified body suited for the Eternal State (1 Cor. 15:42-49) that will be like Christ's body which is untainted by sin.

There are five facts related to the transformation of Church Age saints.

A. The Secret of the Church's transformation.

**Mystery = sacred secret hidden from
past generations (1 Cor. 15:51)**

The secret is that a generation of Church Age Saints will NOT have to wait until the Second Coming and the earthly Kingdom to be resurrected and changed.

A SEPARATE return (SECRET COMING) will occur that will take His resurrected and transformed people back to Heaven (John 14) instead of bringing them immediately to earth.

The word “mystery” is NOT something that can’t be known. In fact, it is quite the opposite. For Paul a mystery is spiritual knowledge that God has revealed to those who are living today. The term “mystery” refers to a sacred secret which was unknown and unrevealed in the past, something that was never taught in the Old Testament revelation concerning Christ’s coming. It was actually a secret about a distinct and

separate return of Christ that would occur BEFORE the Second Coming. There was nothing secret about the O. T. saints being transformed AT the Second Coming of Christ, but there was a secret revelation given about another group of people (Church Age saints) being transformed BEFORE the Second Coming at a Secret return of Christ.

Since this is a “secret prophetic revelation” about Christ’s coming (unknown to past generations but revealed to New Testament saints), and since it gives promises unrelated to Israel and the Second Coming, I have labeled Paul’s teaching on the Rapture and resurrection of New Testament saints as “The Secret Coming.” The Rapture itself will NOT be a secret to the world when it happens. Untold millions suddenly missing from planet earth won’t go unnoticed. In fact, the Rapture will likely hurt the economics of this country like no other country on earth.

The Rapture will not be a secret to the world when millions upon millions suddenly disappear. However, it is a secret teaching or mystery revelation not spoken about in the Old Testament. It is a mystery (secret) from the standpoint of prophetic revelation. It speaks of another return of Christ which is associated with different people, containing different events, including a different location (Heaven). For this reason, it can be appropriately termed as a “Secret Coming” which is distinct or separate from Christ’s Second Coming to earth.

The secret is out! There is a new prophetic truth given to us today! Paul the apostle was given some new revelation in the epistles which reveal a return of Christ that was NOT predicted about in the Old Testament. It was a “secret” from the standpoint of prophetic revelation, hidden in the counsels of God, until Christ made mention of it to His apostles (John 14:1-3), and when Paul specifically revealed more information about it in the epistles (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

The mystery or sacred secret of the rapture and resurrection of Church Age saints is a separate event that occurs BEFORE the Second Coming of Christ to earth. It is therefore a mystery coming or return that is totally different and foreign to the Old Testament teaching regarding Christ’s Second Coming. It is a separate and secret coming that transports the redeemed and glorified Church Age saints to Heaven (John 14:1-3) instead of immediately reigning with them on earth.

The secret transformation spoke of two groups of people.

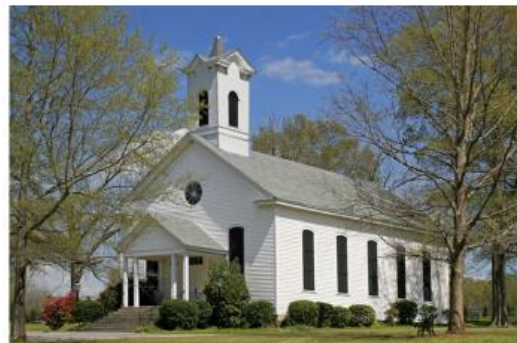
- **It spoke of a hidden secret about the RESURRECTION of Church Age saints.**

Paul says that Church Age saints will be raised at Christ’s Secret Coming known as the Rapture. This is a different group of people.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep (*the term “sleep” is a description of the death of Christians – their bodies are termed sleeping waiting a resurrection*), but we shall all be changed (*transformed*), In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (*the deceased saints*), and we shall be changed (*the living saints*).

The Secret of the Church’s
Transformation
Resurrection of Church Age Saints



Paul first connects the new “mystery” (secret) teaching (“Behold, I show you a mystery”) with the resurrection of a new class of saints (New Testament saints). The Church Age saints who have already died will receive a new body at this separate and Secret Coming (1 Cor. 15:52 – “and the dead shall be raised incorruptible”). Paul taught the same thing when he said in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 how “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

At the funeral services, the pastor got carried away and his sermon far exceeded the time limit. Finally, his assistant whispered, "It's getting late sir!" "I know," the pastor said, "but this doctrine of resurrection is extremely important." "Yes, sir," the assistant said, "But we've got to get the body over to the cemetery in time for the resurrection!"

D.L. Moody once said:

“As I go into a cemetery I like to think of the time when the dead shall rise from their graves. ... Thank God, our friends are not buried; they are only sown!”

The mystery resurrection means that saints who have died during the period of time called the Church Age would NOT HAVE TO WAIT until the Second Coming to get their new body. They will not have to wait until Jesus returns to earth. The Church Age saints would be raised BEFORE the Second Coming at a different and unique return of Christ which specifically revolves around God’s New Testament saints. So, the secret which was withheld from Old Testament saints is that another group of saints (Christ’s Church Age saints), who are distinct from national Israel, would be raised BEFORE the O.T. saints, at a different time, and all of this would occur in relation to a different return of Christ not foretold in the Old Testament. In fact, they will receive a glorified body seven years BEFORE the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 3:10. 19:11-16).

Here is the point. There is NO revelation or teaching found in the Old Testament that God’s Old Testament saints would be raised BEFORE the Second Coming and establishment of Christ’s Kingdom on earth. Therefore, the mystery teaching and sacred secret hidden in the past is now revealed to Church Age saints. And here is the secret. A group of Church Age saints would be raised BEFORE the Second

Coming of Christ to earth and this resurrection would occur in connection with another return of Christ that takes His saints back to Heaven – not to earth.

We must remember that the Old Testaments only knew about Christ's Second Coming to earth and receiving a new body at some point in the far and distant future. They looked through the corridors of time (the tunnel of time with a pair of binoculars!) to a final day and time when Jesus would return to earth. This was called the "latter times" or "last day."



Job 19:25-27

"For I know that my redeemer liveth (a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ), and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (a promise of personal resurrection): Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

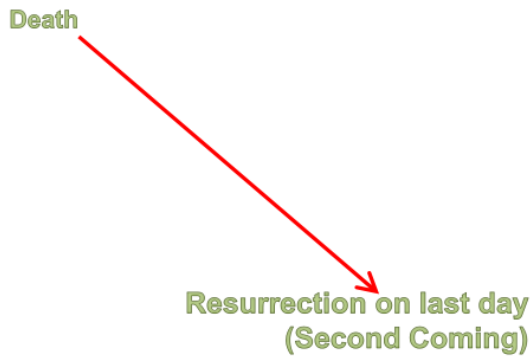
John 11:24

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection **at the last day** (the Second Coming as viewed from the Old Testament perspective).

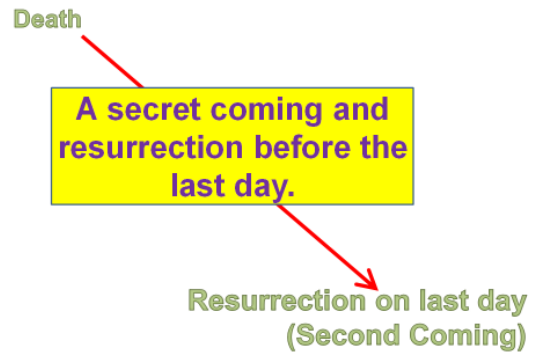
The "last day" is reference to the time when Christ returns to earth to judge it and become King over the earth. The Old Testament saints viewed their resurrection in connection with the Second Coming and living on earth during the earthly Kingdom (the Millennium or 1,000 years). It's the only resurrection they knew about. Their resurrection was not portrayed as something that could take place BEFORE the Second Coming. In other words, they would have to wait until the Second Coming to get their resurrection bodies. In fact, they had to wait for Christ's first coming (His BIRTH) and then wait for the Second Coming before their bodies could be raised from the dead.

Daniel 12:2 envisions the entire resurrection program occurring in conjunction with the Second Coming which was the Old Testament perspective, before the mystery teaching was given about the Church, and a separate resurrection of New Testament saints was revealed. But Daniel’s prophecies reveal how the hope of the Old Testament saint was geared around the Second Coming of Christ to earth – not a Secret Coming before His return to earth.

View of Old Testament Saints



View of New Testament Saints



Old Testament saints are not positioned “in Christ” as New Testament saints who are part of the Secret Coming (1 Thess. 4:16 – “the dead in Christ shall rise first”). Furthermore, the resurrection of O.T. saints was promised to occur at the ending of the seven-year Tribulation Period. This means they will not be part of the mystery resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:16
“...and the dead in Christ shall rise first...”



Old Testament saints Raised at Second Coming which follows Tribulation Period

Daniel 12:2 - “And many of them (Old Testament Jewish saints) that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (resurrection of saved Old Testament saints) ...

Isaiah 26:19 - Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise (resurrection of Isaiah and Old Testament saints) ...

Daniel 12:1-3 reveals this:

“And at that time (*the Second half of the Tribulation Period*) shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (*Israel*): 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 (*the Second Coming*) thy people (*Israel*) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (*the registry of the living – those who*



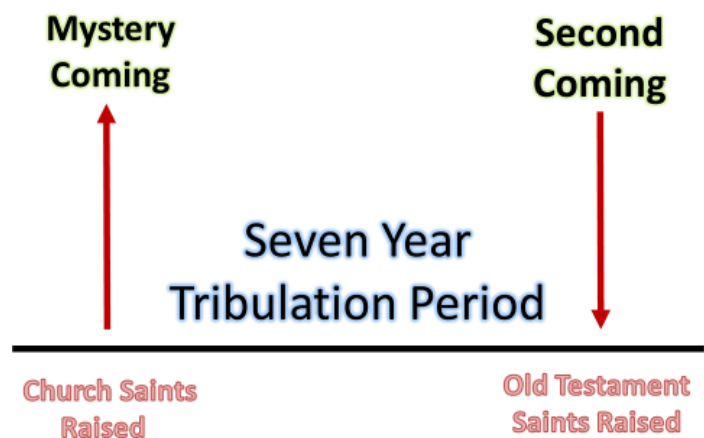
physically survive and are alive at Christ's Second Coming). And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (*resurrection of O.T. saints*), some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt (*Great White Throne Judgment which occurs after the Millennium – Rev. 20*). And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (*their reward*).

Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection of Old Testament saints occurring after the Tribulation Period. You will notice that the Secret Coming or resurrection of Church Age saints is not specified in the Old Testament prophecies for it was not known or revealed (1 Cor. 15:52). Prior to this secret revelation, everyone viewed the Second Coming as the “only coming” and what followed was a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved. However, the New Testament gives us the SECRET about a new coming and separate resurrection that occurs BEFORE the Second Coming.

Daniel 12:13

“But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

This resurrection of Daniel’s people (the Jews) is foretold to happen at the Second Coming. It will occur after the seven-year Tribulation Period. The resurrection of OT saints was not a



mystery. It was revealed in the OT. Therefore, this resurrection will not be part of the mystery period and Christ's return in the Rapture.

"Thy dead men shall live"



Isaiah 26:19 also prophesies of this same event: Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise (*resurrection of Isaiah and Old Testament saints*). Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is* as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (*a bodily resurrection happens in conjunction with Christ's Second Coming to earth*).

These are prophecies that related to the resurrection of Old Testament saints who have died. The resurrection of Old Testament saints occurs in connection with Christ's Second Coming to earth. All the Old Testament saints would have to wait until Christ's first coming (BIRTH) and return to EARTH to get their new bodies. The opposite is true for New Testament saints, who are said to be "in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16). The New Testament saints, who have died, with their unique position in Christ are part of the "mystery" connected with Christ's Coming. Paul states "I show you a mystery" and then goes on to say "and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Cor. 15:52).

There was NO mystery about Old Testament saints being raised AT Christ's Second Coming. According to O.T. prophecies, this was the time when the O.T. saints would be resurrected. This means the O.T. saints could not be included in the mystery return and resurrection. A resurrection of O.T. saints which was not a mystery should not be part of the mystery resurrection. But there was a mystery or sacred

The resurrection of **Old Testament Saints** was **NOT a MYSTERY** for it was repeatedly revealed in the Old Testament. Therefore, it is **NOT PART** of the Church's resurrection back to the **Father's House** which was a mystery or secret hidden in the past.

teaching about New Testament saints (a different class of saints) being raised BEFORE the long-awaited Second Coming, which would occur at a separate return of Christ, a return not prophesied or spoke about in the O.T.

Here is the mystery unraveled: God's New Testament, Church Age saints that have died will be raised BEFORE the Second Coming. They will not wait until the Second Coming and be raised with the Old Testament saints. They will be raised at a different time and different coming of Christ that precedes the Second Coming.

MYSTERY RESURRECTION

This is what the secret is all about – a **different resurrection** at a **different time** for a **different people** (Church Age Saints) at a **different return** of Christ, which results in being taken to a **different location** (Heaven – and not the earth).

Paul left the rabbit out of the hat. He left no stone unturned. He shared this incredible secret with you and me today.

While the last Prince of Wales was on a visit to the Midlands, he went into a certain home. Next day, the man of the household told his mates sadly: "I

never expected him, nor did my wife. The house was untidy, and I hadn't washed. We shall never forgive ourselves. If we had known he was coming, we should have been ready for him." Dear friend, as God's people, we should be spiritually ready to meet the Lord when He returns for His Church, His beloved Bride. We should have our sins confessed, be living for Jesus Christ, serving Him, having our lives in spiritual order.

One night as Dr. Horatius Bonar retired to rest, his last action ere he laid down to sleep was to draw aside the curtain and looking up into the starry heavens, say: "Perhaps tonight, Lord?" In the morning, as he arose, his first movement was to raise the blind, and looking out upon the gray dawn, remark: "Perhaps today, Lord?"

Yes, there is a Secret Coming of Christ for His Church Age saints. Paul revealed that the Secret Coming and transformation spoke of two groups of people. God revealed that a resurrection of Church Age saints would occur at Christ's return. But another group of Church Age saints will take part in this Secret Coming.

- **It spoke of a hidden secret about the RAPTURE of Church Age saints (not revealed in O.T.)**

The Secret of the Church's Transformation

RAPTURE of Church Age Saints



This is what really gets me excited. Paul now deals with another class of New Testament or Church Age saints who are living at the time of the Secret Coming. The next phrase “and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:52) is seen as an another group of saints (distinct from the previous group - the resurrected saints). “We” refers to those saints who will be alive when Jesus returns for His Church. Paul also taught that the living saints would have not have to wait for Christ’s Second Coming to earth to receive their new bodies. Instead, he taught that even the living saints on earth would be changed BEFORE the Second Coming of Christ occurs. They would be transformed at a secret return of Christ that take place BEFORE the long-awaited Second Coming of Christ to earth.

Dwight Pentecost remarks:

“What then is the mystery? The new revelation was the fact that some believer would be translated into God’s presence by a new method without going through the avenue of death and resurrection.”

This is another aspect of the mystery teaching or sacred secret hidden in the past which is now revealed to Church Age saints. And here is the secret. A group of Church Age saints will never die and their bodily transformation would occur in connection with another return of Christ (a secret coming) which results in Christ taking His saints back to Heaven – not to earth. These living saints of the Church Age would not need to wait for the Second Coming to occur and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom. No, they would exit this world at the Secret Coming spoken by Paul.

As we have seen, the Old Testament saints like Job, Daniel, and Isaiah only knew about the resurrection on the “last day” in connection with the Second Coming, when Christ comes back to judge and rule planet earth. The Second Coming was

viewed as occurring far out in the distant future. Until then, the saints would have to die. This means that the O.T. saints would not have the hope of being alive at Christ's Second Coming to earth. This is because during the era of the Old Testament revelation, Christ was not even born, which means He certainly could not return in their lifetime. He must first be born before He can return as Messiah. I may not be the smartest kid on the block but I do know this! Jesus cannot RETURN in His Second coming unto He ENTERS the world in His first coming.

This means that the mystery or sacred secret which was hidden in the past and which is now revealed to Church Age saints is that large group of God's redeemed Church Age saints are NEVER going to die. They will be living when Jesus returns and be raptured away to Heaven BEFORE the Second Coming of Christ. Unlike the O.T. saints, we do not have to be looking down through the corridors of time WAITING for the Second Coming but can be looking up for the Secret Coming to happen at any moment, as prophesied by Paul.



Philippians 3:20 once again states:

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The secret is out! We are NOT going to wait until the Second Coming and the arrival of God's earthly Kingdom (the 1,000 years) to receive a new body. Jesus is born, resurrected, and ascended to Heaven, which means He is ready to return in His Secret Coming to rapture away His Church Age saints, who are still alive, and instantly give them a new body. We might go without dying! We may be part of the generation that is alive when Jesus returns. This is the hope that the Secret Coming gives to us today. Think of it. There will be a generation of believers who are alive

when Jesus returns, who will be instantaneously transformed, so they can receive a body that is suitable for Heaven and the eternal state.

Some of us will escape the undertaker and instead, be taken by the uppertaker! I was doing a Funeral and prior to the committal service I looked at the funeral director and said, "Someday we won't need your services!" I told him that I was looking for the uppertaker – not the understaker! He just stared at me as though I was some kind of crazy guy!

Well, at the Secret Coming, Jesus is going to resurrect dead saints and rapture the living Church Age saints BEFORE the Second Coming and establishment of the earthly Millennial Kingdom. When He returns for Church Age saints, "we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51), both living and dead saints who have lived during the Church Age, and together we will be transported back to Heaven to live with Him for seven years.

The word "rapture" comes from the Latin word *rapto*, the Greek word *herpadzo*. Both mean the same thing, a "catching away." We're going to be changed, transformed in an instant, then caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Some say the word "rapture" is not found in the Bible. This is true. The English word "rapture" is not found in the Bible. But neither is the English word "trinity" or "missions." But I guarantee you, the Trinity, missions, and the Rapture are all taught in the Bible.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

"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."

Someone called the Rapture – "The Great Snatch." Beloved, this world is not our home. We're going to be snatched away.

"caught up" (1 Thess. 4:17)
means to seize, catch
away, snatch up or
"to rapture"



Secret Coming or Rapture

“Some bright morning
When this life is over
I'll fly away
To that home on
God's celestial shore
I'll fly away
I'll fly away, oh glory
I'll fly away in the morning
When I die,
Hallelujah by and by
I'll fly away!”

A man once asked me in a sarcastic tone, “You don’t believe in that fly away doctrine? I told him unmistakable terms: Yes, I believe that I am going to fly out of this world someday. Yes, we will be “caught up” or snatched away.

Somewhat said:

“Some of the saints are going to go up feet first (upside down) because they are holding on to so much in this world.”

The Bible teaches that “we shall all be changed.” This means that every Christian will be changed no matter how much or little they have lived for the Lord. This means there is no such thing as a partial Rapture which is a theory that has actually been taught by some over the years. All of God’s children will be suddenly raptured away when Jesus returns in the Secret Coming for His Church Age saints.

A strange event in the American rail system was the mysterious disappearance of a refrigerator car from the center of a long freight train during a nonstop trip of 25 miles in Pennsylvania on a night in 1898. The car was found by a farmer three weeks later. It was concealed by a group of trees at the foot of an embankment. No person knew what had happened to it. While rounding a sharp, steep curve, the car had become uncoupled at both ends. After the car had toppled from the rails, the rear section of the train caught up with the front section, and the train coupled itself together once again. As a result, the train seemed to be fully intact, except for the

mysterious refrigerator car, which was no longer part of the train. It seemed as if the missing car had vanished into thin air!

Dear friend, someday millions of people will suddenly and mysteriously disappear from off the face of the earth. It will seem like they vanished into thin air. From all walks of life and from virtually every phase of living there will be people missing. The freeways, subways, airports and streets may very well be in shambles as engineers, pilots, bus drivers and a multitude of private car owners shall suddenly be caught up and disappear from planet earth. This will cause great disruption on this earth. It will be many months before the world can unscramble the mangled cars, trains and fallen aircraft. The world will be in shock as a result of this mysterious disappearance of millions of people. The headline papers may very well read, "Millions Missing!" Many will no doubt explain the mysterious departure as an alien invasion and abduction. Others may know that something supernatural has happened and turn to the Scriptures for an explanation of this event.

We are going to be raptured from planet earth at the Secret Coming and taken back to the Father's House where our wedding with the Lamb (Jesus Christ) will be consummated.

The Church has a wedding invitation!



Revelation 19:7

**"Let us be glad and rejoice,
and give honour to him:
for the marriage of the Lamb is come,
and his wife hath made herself ready."**

A widely respected man known as "Uncle Johnson" died in Michigan at the incredible age of 120. Perhaps his advanced years could be credited in part to the cheerful outlook that characterized his life. One day while at work in his garden, he was singing songs of praise to God. His pastor, who was passing by, looked over the

fence and called, "Uncle Johnson, you seem very happy today." "Yes, I was just thinking," said the old man. "Thinking about what?" questioned his pastor. "Oh, I was just thinking that if the crumbs of joy that fall from the Master's table in this world are so good, what will the great loaf in glory be like! I tell you, sir, there will be enough for everyone and some to spare up there."

I'm looking forward to the great and glorious day when I step inside the gates of Glory. Just think of stepping on shore and finding it Heaven! I will see the Lord Jesus Christ, the gates of pearl, the great heavenly city, and find the dwelling place that Jesus has prepared for me. I will witness the breathtaking beauty of God's creative Heaven and enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with God and reunion with the saints of all the ages. What a day of all days it will be. Let's remember the promise. Someday Jesus Christ is going to return and transport His bride back to Heaven to live with Him.

John 14:3

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye!
How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love, and grace
That prepared for me a mansion in the sky!"

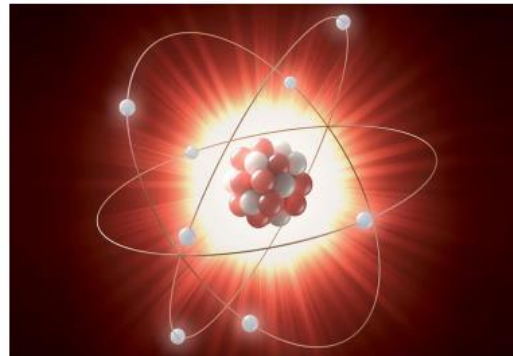
We are looking at five facts related to the transformation of Church Age saints. We have seen the secret of the Church's transformation. But we must move on in our study.

B. The speed of the Church's transformation (vs. 52)

The Bible teaches that this transformation which accompanies Christ's Secret Coming for His own will be instantaneous since it will all take place "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor.15:52).

Did you know the word translated “moment” (atomos) is the same word we get our word “atom” from? The word “atom” (moment) actually means something that is so small that it cannot be divided any further. The Rapture will occur so quickly and suddenly that the time frame in which it occurs cannot be humanly divided. In a flash of a second, every living believer on earth will be gone. Suddenly, without warning, only unbelievers will be populating planet earth as a result of the Rapture. Paul says that in a moment (in Greek, the phrase literally means in "an atom of time") the dead will be raised and we will be changed and raptured! This means that our transformation will occur in a split second – in an Atomic Second!

“In a moment – an atom of time”



“In the twinkling of an eye”



Paul goes on to say, “in the twinkling of an eye” all this will happen. It’s said that the average person blinks his eyes between 15,000 and 20,000 times a day. This means that every day there are at least 20,000 opportunities for the Lord Jesus to return! When we twinkle or flicker our eyelids we do so with great speed. Our bodily transformation will be an event that occurs with lightning like speed. Scientists have computed that it takes one-fiftieth of a second to blink an eye. Now that is amazingly fast. But this is how fast our bodies will be transformed. A person blinks 25 times a minute. Thus, a motorist who averages 55 miles per hour on a 10-hour trip actually drives 33 miles with his eyes shut! I just thought you might like to know this for your next road trip. Changed in the twinkling of an eye!

Yes, changed! The verse concludes that “we shall all be changed” (vs. 52) - both the dead and living! As previously said, the Greek word “changed” means an exchange of one thing for another. We are getting rid of our body and getting a brand new one. Out with the old and in with the new! Folks, our earthly, worn out, diseased,

sickly, and sinful bodies are going to be exchanged for a perfect, sinless, diseaseless, painless, and timeless body.

In one of his lighter moments, Benjamin Franklin penned his own epitaph. He didn't profess to be a born-again Christian, but it seems he must have been influenced by Paul's teaching on the resurrection of the body. Here's what he wrote:

“The Body of B. Franklin, Printer
Like the Cover of an old Book
Its contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Guilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms,
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believ'd,
Appear once more
In a new and more perfect Edition.”

I went to a place called “Ephrata Recycle” to receive some money for aluminum cans that I had been saving. We have all seen scrap yards. There was a great magnet on a crane that would move metal from one place to another. Let's imagine there is all kind of metal lying there on the ground—lead, iron, silver, aluminum and steel. Some of the metal is lying right on top of the ground. Some of it, over time, got buried beneath the ground. Now if you were to take one of those great magnets and sweep it across the ground, pass it over all of that, not every piece of metal would rise. Only iron or an iron alloy would rise. Why? It's because the iron has the same nature as the magnet.

Here is the point. If you have the same NATURE as Jesus Christ, when He comes again, you're going up, whether you're beneath the ground or on top of the ground! You're going up with a new body! If you've been Heaven-born, you will be Heaven-bound!

C. The sound of the Church's transformation (52b – “at the last trump”)

1Thessalonians 4:16 puts it this way: “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.”

1 Corinthians 15:52 gives us more detail by informing us that there will be a series of trumpet sounds at the Rapture. But when the final trumpet note of victory sounds (“the last trump”), we will be raptured.

“At the last trump”

(1 Corinthians 15:52)

&

“the trump of God”

(1 Thessalonians 4:16)



Seriously, the trumpet, as revealed in the Old Testament, signaled the appearance of God.

Exodus 19:16

“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.”

This is the last trumpet blast for the Church before the Bride of Christ is raptured from planet earth. Of course, this will occur BEFORE the seven-year Tribulation Period of Daniel 9:27). There is no basis for posttribulationism (those who believe the Rapture happens AFTER the Tribulation Period) equating this trumpet (the last trump) with the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-19. In other words, those who believe the church is going to pass through the seven-year Tribulation Period identify this last trump with the last trumpet blown during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 11:15). They then conclude that the Church is going to be raptured from earth at the end or following the Tribulation Period.

This of course is a faulty assessment of trumpets. The trumpets of the book of Revelation are blown by angels during the Tribulation Period and are never identified as the trump of God. Nor is the seventh trumpet in the Book of Revelation ever called the last trump. The trumpets in Revelation pertain to judgments during the Tribulation Period, whereas the trumpet in 1 Cor. 15:52 is related to the Church! Let's get our trumpets straight! Not all the trumpets mentioned in the Bible are the same trumpets. We play several different trumpets in our home church. The trumpets are not the same trumpets even though they make a similar sound. They are played by different people at different times.

The expression of the "last trump" is a military term. This would be very familiar with the readers. In the Roman army encampments trumpets were sounded to cause the soldiers to wake up, to pack up their gear, to fall into line, and then to finally march away. A series of trumpet calls was given and on the final trumpet call the soldiers would march away. The last trump means that when Jesus returns in the Rapture, there will be a series of trumpet calls to summons His people, but on the final or last trumpet blow, we will be changed and fly out of this world. I'll fly away to glory, I'll fly away! Someday the trumpet will sound and we will be going home!

"Home, sweet home, home, sweet home—
Where I'll never roam!
I see the light of that city so bright—
My home, sweet home."

TITUS 2:13

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

A BLESSED HOPE: A new glorified body, a home in Heaven, a reunion with our loved ones, a rescue from planet earth (Tribulation Period), and seeing Jesus!

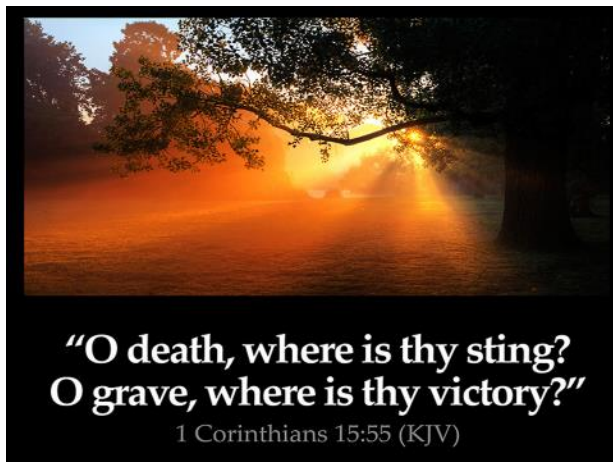
No wonder this is called our blessed hope! It is our blessed hope for we have the hope of a new glorified body, a home in Heaven, a reunion with our saved loves ones, a rescue from planet earth in view of the impending Tribulation Period, and most of all, the hope of seeing Jesus! I remember seeing the face of my fiancée after not seeing her for the entire summer. I was traveling with a summer music

group back in 1983. I remember when I finally got back. I was racing on the back roads of Michigan to get over to Gull Lake Michigan to see my wife. I could not wait to see her. Well, in a similar way, we should anticipate seeing the face of Jesus!

The blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, often shared this expectation in her hymns, such as "Face to Face shall I Behold Him." And this is the very same thought that motivated Norman Clayton (1903-1992) to pen the words of another hymn. He wrote, "We shall see His lovely face some bright golden morning ... Sorrow will be turned to joy, heartaches gone forever; no more night, only light, when we see His face." He continues, "God shall wipe away all tears some bright golden morning, no more crying, pain or death in that home of gladness, trials cease, all is peace, when we see His face." And he concludes, "Songs of vict'ry fill the skies in that hour of greeting, endless days, endless praise, when we see His face." Beloved, the experience of finally seeing the face of a loved one can be a very special event, but it pales in comparison to the promise of what will happen when we finally see the face of our Lord.

D. The saying of the Church's transformation.

There is going to be a victorious cry on this resurrection and Rapture day!



We discover this saying or shout in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57. Let me give a summary of 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 to help us understand what Paul is teaching.

✓ Physical death and its connection to the resurrection & Rapture

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 speaks of physical death:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So

when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

At the Rapture, the Church Age saints who have died will be resurrected (“the dead shall be raised incorruptible”) and the remainder of God’s saints who are alive at Christ’s return will be instantaneously changed or transformed (“and we shall be changed”). Those saints who are raised from the dead and those who bypass death altogether will discover that “Death is swallowed up in victory” as their bodies are released from the realm of death (physical death) through resurrection and transformation. And yes, it could happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, any minute of the day! Perhaps today!

I often share this illustration at the graveside of those saints who have died. The most famous clock in the world is London's Big Ben. It stands by the Houses of Parliament and towers above Westminster Abbey. It is a familiar landmark. The chimes play the tune of a hymn. The hymn is "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth." And because He lives we too, who know the Lord, shall live someday in a new body that will never die (John 14:19).

✓ **Spiritual death and its connection to the resurrection & Rapture**

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 not speaks of spiritual death:

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades), where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The word “grave” is literally “hades” (the place of departed spirits). Paul seems to switch from our physical deliverance via resurrection to our spiritual deliverance from the realm of spiritual death (John 5:24). The point is this. We cannot get to the resurrection (vv. 51-54) unless we bypass Hades, the place of God’s wrath and judgment for sinners (vv. 55-57), and the only way to escape this place is through faith in the Gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Death and Hades (representative of spiritual death – separation from God’s presence) will not have victory over us on this resurrection and transformation day by keeping us from

taking part in the glorious destiny and inheritance of God's saints (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Instead, we who have been saved from God's wrath shall rise with a glorified body like Christ's (the dead Church Age saints), or be instantaneously transformed (the living Church Age saints) to live with Him in the Father's House as Christ promised (John 14:1-3).

At the Rapture, the saints will shout their victory over the sting of death (spiritual death) when they are resurrected and changed into Christ's likeness (1 John 3:2) and possess a glorified body (Rom. 8:17) for the eternal ages of time (Rev. 21-22). Yes, it will be victory for all of God's saints at the Rapture. This is because Hades will not keep us from experiencing this glorious event and wonder of the ages! Furthermore, we will not be part of the "resurrection unto damnation" (John 5:29) but the "resurrection unto life" (John 5:29) all because of Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Hence, our victory over spiritual death results in our victory over physical death by way of resurrection and a new, glorified body that is painless, tearless, timeless, and sinless. Yes, we'll sing and shout the victory!

Years ago, as a younger boy, I remember tying strings around bumble bees, putting the other end on the sissy bars of our bikes, and then riding down the street with the bees buzzing around our heads. People would warn us of the danger of the bees but the danger was removed. It's because we had removed the stingers from the bumble bees before we tied them to our bikes. Folks, Jesus removed the stinger or sting of death when He died and rose from the dead, and when He comes back for His beloved Church, we are going to either be resurrected or raptured and return to the Father's House (John 14:1-3). This is because we have escaped God's wrath and judgment and are destined to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ and live with Him forever in Heaven. You know, it would be a wonderful thing to never die! What a hope we have. We may very well be part of that generation of living believers who will escape death entirely.

"O joy! O delight! Should we go without dying!
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying.
Caught up thru the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives His own.

Oh Lord Jesus, how long, how long
Ere we shout the glad song,
Christ returneth! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Amen, Hallelujah! Amen.”

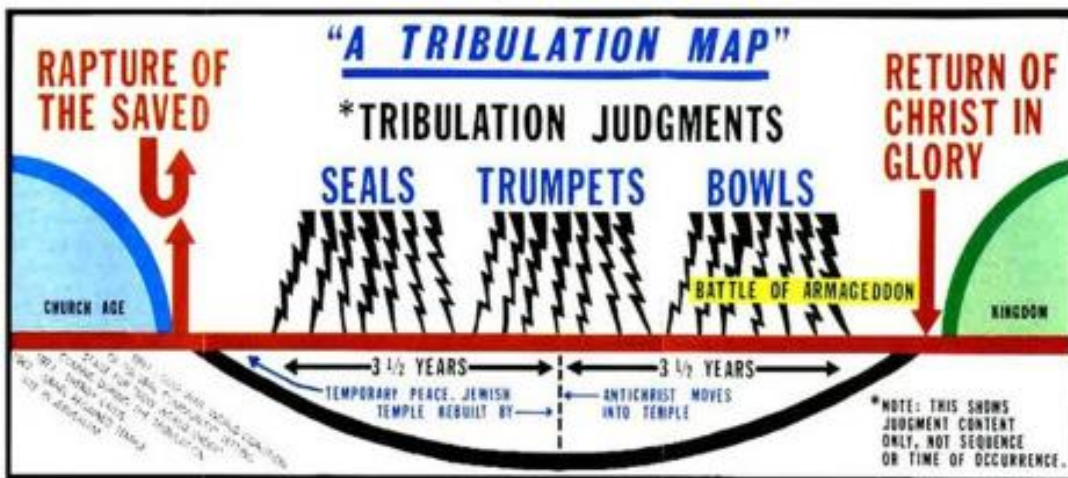
Well, both the dead and living saints of the Church Age will not only escape death but also experience instant transformation when Jesus secretly returns for them. They will undergo a metamorphosis and radical change of their physical bodies. When Paul says, “we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51) he was referring to all the Church Age saints at Christ’s coming and including himself in that company of believers. This was Paul’s own personal hope (Phil. 3:20-21). Paul certainly believed that Christ could return in his lifetime. He wasn’t waiting for the latter day (Second Coming); He was waiting looking forward to Secret Coming.

Philippians 3:20 is worth repeating once again:

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

E. The specific timing of the Church’s transformation.

There is a definite timing linked to the Secret Coming. The Rapture is pretribulational where the Second Coming or Christ’s return to earth is posttribulational (Matt. 24:29). There is not only a SECRET COMING but also a SECRET ESCAPE!



1 Thessalonians 1:10

“And to wait for his Son from heaven (*Christ’s imminent return in the Rapture*), whom he raised from the dead (*the basis of His return*), even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (*the seven-year Tribulation Period*).

1 Thessalonians 1:10

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (the specific wrath of the 7-year Tribulation Period).*

PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE

The “wrath to come” that is mentioned in relation to the Rapture is a specific time of God’s wrath which is the seven-year Tribulation Period. Paul was presenting a very clear pretribulational Rapture of the Church. In other words, the Church would not pass through any portion of the Tribulation Period of Daniel’s 70th week.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord (Tribulation Period) so cometh as a thief in the night (**sudden calamity**). For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them (**judgment of Tribulation Period**), as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (**escape from the seven-year Tribulation Period**).

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance from Tribulation Period) by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake (are physically alive) or sleep (have physically died), we should live together with him (raised or raptured to live with Jesus in Heaven).

The fulfillment of the New Testament mystery includes the transformation of living saints (1 Cor. 15:51), and this is part of a greater plan to rescue the saints from coming earthly judgment. The New Testament also reveals that Jesus is going to return in order to rescue His New Testament saints from a seven-year period of terrible tribulation and judgment that will fall upon planet earth. This means that the Bible teaches the Rapture and resurrection of God's New Testament saints will occur BEFORE the seven years predicted by Daniel (Dan. 9:27). Revelation 3:10 also makes this very clear.

Revelation 3:10

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will **keep thee from** (not through!) the hour of temptation (the 7-year Tribulation Period), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (the unsaved left behind).

**Not WRATH but
RAPTURE!**

There is coming a time of testing or adversity (a specific time of coming wrath) over the entire earth, which is a direct reference to the coming Tribulation Period unfolded in chapters 6-19 of this End Time book. There can be no doubt about the understanding and interpretation of this statement. The believers at Philadelphia were patient in all their trials and persecutions as Christ was and instructed them to be. Therefore, Jesus makes a promise to them that would bring great hope and encouragement to their hearts in view of all their patience. Jesus promised that each one of them would be removed from the earth before the planet moves into the horror and judgment of these years of adversity. Jesus is promising rapture instead of wrath for these dear children of God. This is what He promises to the Church today.

In the summer you can see the approaching thunderstorm coming across the sky. It looks black and dangerous as it blows into the area where you live. So it will be when the Tribulation comes upon this earth. It will sweep across this world like a giant thunderstorm and bring great judgment and devastation to this world. How wonderful to have the complete assurance that Jesus will return and keep us from such a dreadful time of judgment as described in the book of the Revelation.

The Bible says we will be kept “from” (not through) the Tribulation Period. The Greek preposition “from” in relation to the hour of trial must be understood as being kept from the entire period - not deliverance through the time of trouble. The careful selection of words indicates that none of God’s saints will not enter this period at all. If people are still living during a certain time period, they are not kept from it! The word “from” is the Greek preposition “ek.” It means to be out of, kept from, or away from. You can’t miss what Paul is teaching unless you are wearing mid-tribulational eyeglasses, pre-wrath bifocals, or post-tribulational hearing aids!

Again, this promise is connected to Christ’s secret or mystery return which was unknown to the Old Testament prophets and Scriptures. It was a deliverance that was not taught in Old Testament revelation for the Old Testament reveals that many Jews will pass through this time of testing before the Second Coming can occur (Dan. 9:26-27; 12:1-3). However, the mystery teaching of Christ’s return reveals that Jesus will return for the Church BEFORE this catastrophic time of judgment occurs on planet earth.

Since God has chosen to judge the world prior to Christ's return to earth in His Second Coming, there is a NEED for a secret coming of Jesus that is designed to rescue His children from a time of terrible wrath and tribulation. The New Testament teaches that Christ will take His saints back to Heaven, so that they can live with Him, while a seven-year period of judgment (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev. 12:14) is taking place upon planet earth (Revelation 6-19). It's interesting that the Church is never mentioned in Revelation chapters 6-19. Why? This is because the Church has been rescued from God's judgment on planet earth by the secret return of Jesus Christ for His saints.

Jesus will relocate the Church from earth to Heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10; 4:17-18) prior to the Tribulation Period and throughout the seven years of tribulation that will fall upon planet earth. After the seven years, Christ will then come back to earth with His saints (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign with His New Testament saints (Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:6) and fulfill the promises of the Davidic Covenant with the nation of Israel (Luke 1:32-33).

Below is a summary of the mystery or secret coming. The secrets which were revealed about this coming are clearly outlined in Scripture.

Summary of Secret Coming

Different Return than Second Coming

**Distinct Group of People – Church Age
Saints**

**Definite Timing – Before Tribulation
Period**

Defined as Imminent – Any Moment!

**"Maranatha" (our Lord cometh)
1 Corinthians 16:22**

- **It is a different return than the Second Coming.** The Secret Coming occurs BEFORE the Second Coming and is a separate event. This is a return of Christ that occurs between the first and Second Coming of Christ to earth. The Old Testament only revealed the truth about Christ's Second Coming to earth.

The Secret Coming (we call the Rapture of the Church) is an entirely separate event from His Second Coming which is designed to save Israel and the nations at the end of the Tribulation ("And so all Israel shall be saved" – Rom. 11:26). In the Secret Coming (the Rapture), the Lord will meet the body and Bride of Christ in the clouds. It consists of a heavenly return for a heavenly people (Ephesians 1.3). In the Second Coming, the Lord will return to earth, (an earthly return for an earthly people - Zechariah 14.4). The Rapture is the "blessed hope" (Titus 2.13) of the body of Christ and was Paul's personal hope (Philippians 3.11).

- **It involves a distinct group of people.** The secret coming will include only resurrected and raptured Church Age saints who part of the Dispensation of Grace (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:51-52, Eph. 3:2-10). The event of the Secret Coming will not involve Jewish or Old Testament saints for they will be resurrected at the Second Coming (Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:19). It will also not involve Tribulation saints since they will be raised at the end of the Tribulation Period with the Old Testament saints (Rev. 20:1-5).
- **It results in a new destination.** The secret coming results in the Church Age saints returning Heaven and not earth (John 14:1-3). The Rapture passages do not make mention of the establishment of the messianic Kingdom where the Second Coming passages are immediately followed by the discussion of the earthly kingdom (Matt. 24-25).
- **It has a definite timing.** The secret coming occurs before the seven-year Tribulation Period (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-10; Rev. 3:10) whereas the Second Coming occurs after the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:29).
- **It can be defined as imminent.** The secret coming can occur at any moment (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20) for it is a signless and imminent event.

The Old Testament saints had to wait until Christ's birth, death, and resurrection before the Second Coming could occur. In fact, not until after the seven-year Tribulation Period can Jesus actually return in His Second Coming after the revelation of many signs (Matt. 24:29-34).

So there you have it. The mystery (secret) teaching about a distinct and separate coming of Christ can be rightly labeled as a "Secret Coming." It's a secret from the standpoint of prophetic revelation. It was NOT KNOWN until Jesus taught it and before Paul revealed it to us through the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:51-57). All of these different aspects of the mystery (secret) coming of Christ were not revealed in Old Testament times. Therefore, it was indeed a new revelation for new saints (Church Age saints).

All New Testament references regarding Christ's return have to do with His secret coming for the Church unless the New Testament writers specifically speak of Christ's coming in relationship to His kingdom and judgment (2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Jude 14-15). The mystery or Secret Coming, along with the mystery RAPTURE of living saints, along with the mystery RESURRECTION of dead saints (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:17) is appropriately connected to the mystery period of Church age saints (Eph. 3:1-10).

Dear friend, the secret is out! The New Testament, Church Age saints are given the promise of a secret coming BEFORE the Second Coming. This secret return of Christ will result in a radical change of body, a resurrection from the grave, a rapture from planet earth, a return to Heaven, and a rescue from earth's coming climactic judgment. No wonder this secret coming is termed "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

The best is yet to come. A great day is coming. Jesus is coming again. This is why we have a sign on the front of our church which says: Perhaps Today!

"Someday the king of glory will part the clouds, praise His name.

Someday all pain and sorrow will erase.

Someday I'll see my Savior face to face.

Someday, someday He is coming back for me!"