
Don't Be Fooled

DAVID COPPERFIELD is one of today's most famous magicians. In front of live crowds, he made a jet aircraft disappear from a runway. On another occasion he made the Statue of Liberty disappear—or look like it disappeared. Crowds were entertained, and that's what he probably had in mind—to entertain people with illusions and make money doing it.

The biggest illusion of all time is in our near future. In the controversy between good and evil, our world is the prize, and Satan wants it. So he's going to try to stage a counterfeit second coming of Christ, with himself, Satan, masquerading as Christ. What will this illusion be like, and how can we tell the difference between Satan's illusion and the real Second Coming?

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ Everything genuine that God created, Satan has counterfeited. He offers counterfeit happiness, a counterfeit way of salvation, a counterfeit to the true worship of God, and many counterfeit messiahs. Is it possible that before the end of time, Satan will even masquerade as God and counterfeit His coming?
- ♦ "For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and will deceive many...For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:5, 24). Is it possible that even some who believe in Christ's Second Coming could accept false teachings about this event and be deceived?—Don't be fooled!
- ♦ "Therefore, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the desert!' do not go out, or 'Look, he is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it" (Matthew 24:6). Here are seven Biblical facts we can use to identify Christ's true Second Coming and reject Satan's deception when it comes:
 - **Christ's coming is a literal event.** It's an event in history, a specific point in time. "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Our world is weary, war-torn, confused, chaotic, overpopulated, polluted, drug-addicted and morally twisted—but there is hope for complete redemption of our world! Christ came the first time, and He will come again.
 - **Jesus' coming is a personal event.** He's coming Himself; He's not sending emissaries.



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As His disciples watched Him ascend into heaven after His resurrection from the death of the cross, two angels came to them and said, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts

1:11). He who ascended gloriously will descend again gloriously.

Christ's coming is a visible event: "Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him" (Revelation 1:7). Every eye! "Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth...will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

Christ's coming is an audible event. "And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings: and there was a great earthquake" (Revelation 16:18). "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Christ's coming is a glorious event. "For as the lightning flashes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

Christ's coming is climactic—the culminating event of Earth's history. "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat upon him was called Faithful and True. And the armies in heaven...followed him on white horses" (Revelation 19:11). The destiny of every human being is settled; the war between good and evil is over forever.

Christ's coming is a decisive event. There are only two classes of people, and no second chance to make a final decision. Your decisions now will decide your eternal destiny. "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly" (Jude 14, 15). "The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13:49).

You may have read or heard about a "secret rapture." The word *rapture* never occurs in the Bible—not once. This idea originated with the passage above from 1 Thess. 4. It continues, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The Latin word for "caught up" is *rapi*, from which we get "rapture." Certainly we'll be caught up—but it won't be a secret! 1 Thess. 5:2 says, "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." This "surprise" refers to *when* He comes (because God's Word doesn't tell us the day or the hour of His coming), not *how* He comes. The Bible gives so many facts about what His coming will look, sound, and feel like that we can't base a secret rapture on this verse. Luke 17:35 says, "Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." Certainly this is true of Christ's coming; not everyone will choose God and rise to meet Jesus in the air. But this text provides no proof of Christ secretly rapturing people, especially when the Bible makes it so plain that Christ's coming will be public, loud, and personal!

Just between you . . . and God:

• How is it with you? Have you given your life to Jesus Christ? When He comes, will you see your son, your daughter, your spouse again? To miss heaven is to miss everything. One day there will be no more war, no more sorrow, sickness, prejudice, broken hearts. Is anything more important than being with Christ?

• If you are clinging to something that feels more important than God, tell Him about that. Is it really more important? He'll set you free. Whatever it is, it's not worth hanging onto if you miss eternity. Give your all to Him, won't you?

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The "take-home" message for you . . .

• How is it with you? Have you given your life to Jesus Christ? When He comes, will you see your son, your daughter, your spouse again? To miss heaven is to miss everything. One day there will be no more war, no more sorrow, sickness, prejudice, broken hearts. Is anything more important than being with Christ?

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