

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” (2 Pet 3:10, NIV)

Peter says that not only should the faithful cling to what the prophets of old have said, but the false teachers to come would even go so far as to deny Christ himself.

“1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” (2 Pet 2:1-3, NIV)

We can see that Peter, like Jesus and like Paul, took the Hebrew prophecies seriously. Peter looked at them as things to be literally fulfilled in the future. And he warned of false prophets and false teachers that ultimately would even deny Christ.

The Angels Teach About the Second Coming

Even the angels testified to a literal Second Coming of Christ on the clouds in glory, just as Daniel spoke about (Dan 7:13). After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared among his Disciples and taught them more about the Kingdom of God. And at the last they gathered around him as he ascended into heaven.

“6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:6-11, NIV)

“13 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Dan 7:13-14, NIV)

As Jesus is literally taken up into Heaven in a cloud two angels appear and tell the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way. The angels do not say Jesus will return in an allegorical way, rising up spiritually in the hearts of new believers in every generation, influencing world leaders through the philosophies and values of Christianity, nor in working through governments throughout history to bring about a fairer and more just world. No, the return of Christ is a literal single event. A singularity that will occur in the future.

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Like Jesus, Paul, and Peter, the angels speak of specific literal events to take place in the future, not of secret allegorical teachings about an inner experience in new believers, nor in events that repeat throughout history. The Apostle's Creed bears witness to this, for "We believe that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead" and "We believe in the resurrection of the body and in the life everlasting." The Bible, and even early church tradition, views the Hebrew Bible prophecies as describing literal events of the future, not as already fulfilled events of the past, and not as allegories of secret hidden spiritual meanings for all believers in all generations throughout history.

WHY ARE THERE DIFFERENT TRADITIONAL VIEWS?

Remember our two fundamental questions that divide the Christian denominations today:

- 1) Do we take these passages allegorically or literally?
- 2) Are these events of the past or future, both (repeated events), or never?

The primary mode of interpretation (allegorical or literal) has examples throughout the Bible as well as church traditions that support each. But in fact, it is more complicated than just allegorical versus literal. Historically there are actually four different types of biblical interpretation, and we can see each of these being used in the New Testament. The four traditional views (interpretative modes) of scripture that originated in Judaism and continue in Christianity are:

1. the literal and plain "simple" (*peshat*, פֶּשֶׁט) meaning,
2. the allegorical and hidden meaning just beyond the literal that "hints" (*remez*, רמז) at another truth,
3. the comparative meaning found by comparing the passage to other similar passages and "expounding" (*drash*, דְּרַשׁ) on arcs and absolute principles found throughout scripture, and