

The Appearances of Jesus

We read prophecies of the appearance of God's perfect servant throughout the Old Testament. The servant who would establish justice and complete the fulfillment of all prophecy from Genesis to Malachi. In both Testaments are prophecies of a savior who would return to carry the saints to eternal paradise in the presence of God. These prophecies are about Jesus, born of man, and begotten by God. He made His first appearance slightly over 2000 years ago. Someday, He will appear again, returning to fulfill the final promises. There is one fact common to and five differences about these two appearances.

The only thing common about both appearances is that they are both promised in scripture. The prophet said *"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this"* (Isaiah 9:6-7). And when He came, He left His disciples with these words about His second appearance. *"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:3).

In His first appearance, He came as a man so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for mankind's sin. *"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"* (Philippians 2:8). When He returns, He will come as God. *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

His first appearance was announced by the angels of heaven. *"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'"* (Luke 2:10-11). His second appearance will be unannounced, with no further warning than what is recorded. *"For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night"* (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Because it was expected, the time of His first appearance was predicted. *"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"* (Daniel 9:25). The time of His second coming is known only by the Father himself. *"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe"* (Revelation 14:14-15).

The mission of Jesus on His first appearance was to save the lost. *"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost"* (Matthew 18:11). When He appears again, His mission will be different. He will come as the judge. Jesus said of Himself *"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds"* (Matthew 16:27). And as Paul said of the world, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may*

be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When the Son of God first came to this earth, He submitted to the Jewish and Roman authorities. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Paul cited the judgment authority of Christ when he advised Timothy to preach and teach. *"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:1-2).*

Let us remember Paul's words to Titus. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:11-14).