The coming of the Lord Jesus to the world unfolds in three major phases, each with distinct signs and purposes according to Scripture.

1.His Birth through the Virgin Mary

The first coming of Christ was a unique historical event where God became flesh through the virgin Mary (John 1:14). This event fulfilled Old Testament messianic prophecies, including the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14).

> *Luke 1:30-32 (ESV) states:*
> “And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.’”

- Incarnation: God taking on human flesh to redeem humanity.
- Messiah’s Davidic lineage: Jesus inherits the throne of David, affirming His role as the promised King (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

- Grace: Mary was chosen by grace, signifying God’s sovereign plan.

2.The Rapture of the Church

The second coming involves the *rapture* a sudden, secret catching up of believers to meet Christ in the air before the Great Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The event is sudden and selective, as Jesus described in Luke 17:34-36 (NIV):

> “I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”

- Imminence: This event can happen at any time, encouraging believers to be spiritually ready (Matthew 24:42-44).
- Separation: The rapture divides the faithful from those who are not ready or who reject Christ.
- Hope: The rapture is a blessed hope for the church (Titus 2:13).

Signs preceding the rapture (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21):

- False Christs and false prophets deceiving many.
- Wars, rumors of wars.

- Increase of lawlessness and coldness of love.
- Natural disasters.
- Persecution of believers.

These signs are described as “birth pains” (Matthew 24:8, ESV), indicating the approach but not the immediate arrival of Christ.

3.The Visible Return for the Millennial Reign

The third coming of Christ is visible to all, with every eye seeing Him (Revelation 1:7), and will inaugurate His 1,000 year kingdom on earth (Revelation 20). This happens after the Tribulation period and the rise of the Antichrist.

> *Revelation 1:7 (NIV) says:*
> “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him,” and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.”

- Judgment: The rebellious are judged and mourn.
- Kingdom establishment: Christ reigns physically on earth for a thousand years.

- Fulfillment of prophecy: God’s promises to Israel and the nations are fulfilled.

Signs that Precede Each Coming

Before the First Coming: The Coming of Elijah/John the Baptist

The Old Testament prophet Malachi 4:5 prophesied Elijah’s return before the Messiah. This was fulfilled by John the Baptist, who came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).

> *Luke 1:13-17 (NIV):*
> “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard… Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be great in the sight of the Lord… He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children.”

John’s ministry prepared the way for Jesus’ first coming (Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:1-3).

Before the Second Coming: Signs Leading to the Rapture

Jesus gave several signs signaling the approach of His return and the rapture of the church, as recorded in Matthew 24 (ESV) and Luke 21:

- Deception by false Messiahs.
- Wars and conflicts.
- Famines and earthquakes.
- Persecution of believers.
- Increase in wickedness and moral decay.

These signs are called “the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:8), meaning the rapture is imminent but not immediate.

Before the Third Coming: Cosmic Signs and the Great Tribulation

The final coming will be preceded by dramatic cosmic disturbances signaling the end of the age:

- The sun darkened.
- The moon turning blood red.
- Stars falling from heaven.

> *Matthew 24:29-31 (ESV):*

> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light... Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven... And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather his elect.”

Luke 21:25-27 (NIV) also describes these signs, emphasizing the fear and awe of the nations at His visible return.

These signs follow the Great Tribulation period, during which the church is absent (having been raptured).

- Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
- Are you confident that if He returned today, you would go with Him in the rapture?
- If unsure, seek Him earnestly, for the time is near.

Maranatha! “Our Lord, come!” (1 Corinthians 16:22).

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