Moreover, it should be noted that as many orthodox doctrinal statements testify, the Second Coming of Christ will be **personal, bodily and visible**. These facts are important because up until the Second Coming Christ’s presence is only spiritual, and non-visible. Therefore in many places the Bible speaks of the **revealing or appearing** of Christ as He shall appear **personally** and in the **body**. This is most clearly indicated by our text, “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven.”

**Hebrews 9:27-28** - 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him**. NASB

**1 Timothy 6:14-15** - 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time** — He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; NASB

**2 Timothy 4:1-2** - 1 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**; NASB

**1 Peter 1:7** - 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the **revelation of Jesus Christ**; NASB

Not only will He come personally and bodily, but He will come **visibly** so that His coming is witnessed by the entire world. This coming is said to be with power and great glory as He will be feared and marveled at by both the unbelieving world and those who have eagerly awaited His coming.

**Revelation 1:7** - 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; **and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him**. Even so. Amen. NASB

**Mark 14:62** - 62 And Jesus said, “I am; and **you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven**.” NASB

**Matthew 24:30** - 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and **then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky** with power and great glory. NASB

**Matthew 16:27** - 27 “For **the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.**” NASB

**Mark 13:26** - 26 “And then **they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.**” NASB

B. and the dead in Christ will rise first. – Here Christ’s first order of business at His coming is the gathering of His people, and this is done through **the resurrection of dead** saints and the translation of living saints to meet together in the air. Here is what Paul was describing in verse 15, **“the dead in Christ will rise first,”** and not **“precede we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, v-15.”** Note the order of events, **“the dead in Christ will rise first,”** THEN, **“we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them.”** But don’t miss these very key words and the significance of them, **“the dead in Christ will rise.”** It is very significant here that **the resurrection of the dead takes place at the Second Coming.** This resurrection must be understood in light of the whole context of Scripture in its teaching on the resurrection of the dead, for the resurrection of dead people is mentioned in many places in Scripture. There were miraculous healings of dead people who were raised by prophets in the Old Testament, Apostles in the New Testament, and also by our Lord Himself (1 Kings 17:20-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37, 13:21, Mark 5:41-43, John 11:43-44, Acts 9:40-41, Acts 20:9-12). Of course the most significant resurrection is that of our Lord Himself after His crucifixion, death and burial.

**1 Corinthians 15:2-8** - 2 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and **that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time**, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep: 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, **He appeared to me also.** NASB
The Two Resurrections

There are many resurrections of dead people in Scripture, but the hope of a general resurrection of all people is a clear teaching in Scripture. This appears in the Old Testament.

Job 19:26-27 - 26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom you shall see and not another. My heart faints within me. NASB

Isaiah 26:19-21 - 19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. 20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms, And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while, Until indignation runs its course. 21 For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed, And will no longer cover her slain. NASB

Ezekiel 37:12-13 - 12 "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God," Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves. My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 "Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves. My people. NASB

And it also appears in the New Testament.

Mark 12:24-27 - 24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God? 25 "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 "But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken." NASB

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 - 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, and after that those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. NASB

Hebrews 6:1-2 - 1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. NASB

Revelation 20:4-6 - 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand: and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. NASB

In fact, there are two resurrections that are spoken of in Scripture which have yet to happen in the course of history and are clearly taught as separate events. They are referred to as the resurrection unto life for the righteous AND the resurrection unto judgment or contempt for the wicked.

Daniel 12:1-3 - 12 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3 "And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. NASB

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**John 5:28-29** - 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. NASB

**Acts 24:14-15** - 14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. NASB

But these resurrections are **separated by a period of 1000 years** and clearly taught as separate events. Notice Revelation 20 verse 5.

**Revelation 20:4-6** - 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. NASB

**Revelation 20:11-15** - 11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **This is the second death**, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. NASB

Notice in these two passages the contrast behind the statements in 20:5 about **“the first resurrection,”** over whom **“the second death has no power v-20:6,”** and **“the second death,”** of verse 20:14. Those who are raised in the first resurrection shall become immortal and never again be subject to death. They will live forever from that point forward.
Now when considering the resurrection mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 it is important to realize that this resurrection must of course be the resurrection of the righteous unto life, as these are God’s people the church who have been promised eternal life and in fact those who do not have to “grieve like the rest who have no hope,” because the Christian hope is that we will be raised again to eternal life and forever be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the “first resurrection” is the first order of business at Jesus Second Coming as the passage tells us, as the living saints join “the dead in Christ” who have risen first.

C. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord – The word “then” in this context explains that the event which is described happens after the prior event he just mention, “the dead in Christ will rise first.” This of course was Paul’s point in verse 4:15 when he said “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” After the dead in Christ are raised, “we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Now of this spectacular event there is much said in Scripture, it is in fact the event referred to as the rapture. The Greek word for “caught up,” harpazo, is the Latin rapio from which we get the English word rapture. It is the translation of living saints from the earth, to the sky, by a powerful act of God which will also transform the bodies of those living saints into glorious immortal bodies. This is in fact the blessed hope of the church, the Second Coming of Christ and the transformation of our bodies to be like His glorious body.

Titus 2:13 - 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. NASB

Colossians 3:4 - 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. NASB

At this time, there will be a powerful transformation of the bodies of living saints, from mortal to immortal and never again to be subject to death.

1 John 3:2 - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. NASB

Philippians 3:20-21 - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. NASB

Notice also, that the translation of living saints united them to both the “dead in Christ” who were just raised, and the Lord Himself, “together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” The raptured saints will meet “together with them,” and also “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Notice that the common picture of the Second Coming of Christ is “in the clouds,” and this is where the raptured saints meet the resurrected saints in 1 Thess 4:15-17. This is a key indicator that these events (the rapture and the Second Coming), happen at the same time (post-tribulationism) and are not separated by a period of seven years (pre-tribulationism).

Acts 1:9-11 - 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; 11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." NASB

Revelation 1:7 - 7 Behold. He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB