

The “second coming” of the Lord has been made a very confused issue, all I ask is every reader examines these things; please don't take it from me.

It is my opinion that the enemy has truly blinded our eyes to the hope before us today. The rapture is the biggest set of blinkers the enemy has softly slid across our eyes. The crown of righteousness is for those who love His “appearing” which is not the man made “rapture”.

1Thess.4 was the hope before the believers during the Acts period. 1Thess.4 describes how the believers at that time would go up to meet the Lord as He descended to the earth. There is nothing in 1Thess.4 about anyone going back into heaven, search and see what that passage really says, not what we have been told it says.

1Thess.4 was written during the Acts period when Israel remained a people before God. After Israel was set aside at Acts 28, the hope of 1Thess.4 was also set aside and a new dispensation with a new hope was revealed to Paul. 1Thess.4 is not the hope before us today, we must “distinguish things that differ”.

The hope before us today is the phaneroo; the appearing of the Lord. This is not the parousia which is the coming of the Lord as found in 1Thess.4. The Lord's “second coming” is a threefold event. It unfolds in three stages which occur at the same time. Here are the three stages;

**Stage one.** The phaneroo or appearing.

The Lord appears in the heavenly places. He is seated at the Father's right and in that future day of gloominess when the sun and moon do not give light, He appears. The light blazes forth and everyone sees Him up there. All on earth see Him; all in Heavenly Places will see Him as well. This is our hope. Col.3:1-4. We will be raised and appear with Him there.

**Stage two.** The descent out of Heaven aspect of His parousia or coming to the earth.

The Lord leaves heavenly places and descends to the earth through the clouds of the air with trumpet blast, shout and voice. This is not our hope; it belongs to another called out company, the elect remnant; the seed of Abraham.

**Stage three.** His personal presence on the earth. This is included in the term parousia.

The Lord will arrive back on the earth exactly where He previously left it, the Mount of Olives. There He will re-gather Israel back into their land. This is the hope of Israel.

Even though these things take place at the same time, they are different. Even though these three aspects are His “second coming”, they need to be kept apart, not in time, but in our understanding. These three aspects represent three hopes for three groups of companies and we must not mix them.

Tradition and some modern theories divide these three stages into wide time gaps. So we are taught that the Lord “comes” in the clouds, raptures away “the Church” and then comes back to the earth much later for Israel. This concept is not supported in Scripture. The appearing and the parousia are not separated by time.

Those readers who love to examine the Greek words the Holy Spirit used will see that I have not yet distinguished between phaneroo and epiphaneia. I also acknowledge there are different words for “coming” in the original.

Previously, we looked at these three stages of the Lord's “Second Coming” in Matthew.

#### **Stage 1**

**Mat 24:30** And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. .... This is the appearing or first visible aspect of his “second coming”. (Greek students note, the word for “appear” is phaino, the base word for phaneroo and epiphaneia).

#### **Stage 2**

**Mat 24:30** .... And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory. This is the “descent” aspect of His “second coming”.

#### **Stage 3**

**Mat 24:31 and 25:31** But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory.

**Mat 25:32** And all nations shall be gathered before Him. This is the “arrival” aspect of His “second coming”.

Here are the first two stages again in Matthew.

## Stage 1

Mat 26:64 Jesus said to him, You said *it*. I tell you more. From this time you shall see the Son of Man sitting on *the right hand* of power, ..... This is 1<sup>st</sup> stage, the appearing aspect of his “second coming”.

## Stage 2

Mat 26:64 ..... and coming on the clouds of the heavens. This is the “descent” aspect of His “second coming”.

At the “appearing” the Lord does not move; He is seated at the Father’s right hand above the air and clouds and we go to Him there. At His “coming” He moves out of heavenly places through the clouds and air back to and stands upon the earth. These three stages constitute His “second coming”.

In the book of Acts, when the Lord’s return to the earth was expected, Stephen (chapter 7) saw heaven opened and the Lord standing at the Father’s right hand. Stephen saw a vision of the first stage of the Lord’s coming but he was not expecting to go to that appearing.

Revelation speaks about the heavens departing like a scroll and then the world will see into heaven and the Son of Man sitting on the throne, Rev.6. The Lord gave Stephen an encouraging vision about His soon return to the earth at which point Stephen will be resurrected. Regarding Stephen; some teach that Israel were judged and put away at Stephen’s death, since they assume the Lord stood in judgment. They then erroneously go on to assume that from Acts 9 Paul started to teach about “the church”. This is an impossible theory since Stephen, like his Lord before Him (Luke 23:34) begged on Israel’s behalf, “lay not this sin to their charge”. The very next chapter begins with the widening of the ministry in and to Israel according to the commission to the 12 in Acts 1:8. This is not some new commission given to Paul.

When we read the letters in the New Testament we find many authors referring to the first and second stages of the Lord’s “coming” as synchronous events. In other words, they interplay “coming” and “appearing” to describe the Lord’s return as occurring at the same time. Here are some examples where “coming and appearing” are so used. Please note that there is no suggestion, not one hint, that the appearing and coming are years apart.

John is an apostle to Israel and Israel will not be “appearing” with Christ in the heavenly places, yet John tells us plainly that these two stages are at the same time. In the second passage John says “we shall see Him” (from the earth) when He “appears” in the heavenly places. Every eye will see Him and this is consistent with the Lord’s words in Matthew.

1Jn 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He is revealed (phaneroo = 1<sup>st</sup> stage of His coming), we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him in His coming (parousia =, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of His coming).

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He shall be revealed (phaneroo = 1<sup>st</sup> stage of His coming), we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Peter is also an apostle to Israel and he writes about the first two stages as being at the same time. Peter uses both “appear” and “coming” interchangeably regarding the Old Testament Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is the subject of Revelation and God’s purposes for the earth. Peter, like John, did not write about anyone going to the “appearing”. Peter uses the word “appear” with the Lord’s earthly title of Shepherd, not His above heavenly title of Head. While Peter knew the “appearing” took place in the heavenly places he only knew it as the first stage of the Lord’s coming back to the earth. He did not embrace it as his hope. This is why he links it with the Lord’s ministry on the earth; the earth is where the Good Shepherd operates. Peter refers to the transfiguration which anticipates the Lord’s glory on earth.

1Pe 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear (phaneroo = 1<sup>st</sup> stage of His coming), you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory.

2Pe 1:16 For not having followed fables having been cunningly devised, but becoming eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus Christ, we made known to you the power and coming (parousia =, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of His coming) of our Lord.

2Pe 3:4 and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? (parousia =, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of His coming). For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (we shall see this phrase in Thess., also written in the Acts period), in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. And the earth and the works in it will be burned up.

2Pe 3:13 But according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The “appearing” is the first stage of the Lord’s “second coming” and all NT writers knew about this but not all held it as their hope. In Paul’s Acts period ministry, he also interplays the first and second stage words to speak of the Lord’s

“second coming” and like John and Peter at that time, he did not know that anyone would “appear” with the Lord in the heavenly places. It was only after Acts Paul wrote about the appearing as a new hope. After Acts and only after Acts does Paul write about a company which will appear with Christ in the heavenly places.

Praise our loving Heavenly Father, this company is the company to which you and I belong; the Church which is His Body and our hope is realized before the so called rapture, isn't that exciting