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THE RETURN OF OUR LORD JESUS

There are several expressions in the New Testament that describe the return of Jesus. The purpose of this study is to highlight these expressions and to show that they refer to the same event.

The book of Hebrews says, "*He (Jesus) will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him*" (Hebrews 9:28). Jesus appeared the first time when He was on earth. When He returns it will be His second appearance. Here is a list of the major expressions in the New Testament that describe Jesus' return:

- I. He will be "REVEALED" (apokalupsis).
- II. He will be caused "TO APPEAR" (phaneroo).
- III. He will put in an "APPEARANCE" (ephiphania).
- IV. He will be "SEEN" (Orao).
- V. He will "COME" (erchomai-elthein) BACK.
- VI. He will "COME DOWN" (katabaino) from heaven.
- VII. He will be "PRESENT" (parousia).

These different expressions do not indicate that the Lord will return in different ways or at different times. Rather, each of them describes a different aspect of Jesus' return.

The quotations from the Bible that are used in this study are taken from the New International Version of the Bible (NIV). Although the NIV is highly readable, it does not always translate Greek terms consistently. This, of course, is confusing to anyone who is trying to study Biblical expressions. In order to avoid confusion, I have supplied (in parentheses) a transliterated form of the Greek words for Jesus' return. We will look now at each of these words and at the verses in which they are used.

I. JESUS WILL BE "REVEALED" (APOKALUPSIS)

The Greek word for "revelation" is "apokalupsis." This word is used in various ways in the Greek New Testament. When it is used to describe Jesus' return, it implies that Jesus is now hidden but will one-day be

“revealed.” Please look at some of the events that the New Testament says will transpire when Jesus is “revealed:”

A. WICKED PEOPLE WILL BE DESTROYED WHEN JESUS IS “REVEALED.”

Jesus said, *“But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed (apokalupto)”* (Luke 17:29-30).

The day on which the Son of Man will be “revealed” will be similar to the day on which Sodom was destroyed. Jesus described in this verse the forceful harvesting of wicked people from the earth.

Jesus was speaking of Himself when He said “the Son of Man” would be “revealed,” for Jesus is the Son of Man.

B. SAINTS WILL BE FOUND BLAMELESS WHEN JESUS IS “REVEALED.”

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, *“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (apokalupsis). He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:7-8).

Note that saints will be found “blameless” on a day that is referred to in these verses as “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The day on which the saints will be found blameless is, of course, the Judgment Day.

The “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the Judgment Day. For more on this see our study of “The Day.”

C. PERSECUTORS WILL BE PAID BACK WHEN JESUS IS “REVEALED.”

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian brethren concerning the people who were persecuting them. He said, *“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed (apokalupsis) from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus”* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

Those who have persecuted God's people will find it a terrifying experience when Jesus is "revealed." The persecutors and others who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel will be punished. At the same time God's people will find "relief."

The above passage connects the revealing of Jesus with the punishing (harvesting) of wicked people and with "relief" for God's people. God's people will be given "relief" when Jesus gathers them from this earth.

D. GOD' PEOPLE WILL RECEIVE PRAISE, GLORY, AND HONOR WHEN JESUS IS "REVEALED."

The apostle Peter indicated that God's people would be honored at the revelation of Jesus. They will be honored because of the hardships they have suffered. Peter said, "*These [trials] have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (apokalupsis)*" (1 Peter 1:7).

The hardships that Christian people endure will result in their being given "praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (apokalupsis). The time at which Christ's people will be honored in this way is, of course, the Judgment. We see, therefore, a connection between Jesus' being "revealed" (apokalupsis) and the Judgment.

E. GRACE WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SAINTS WHEN JESUS IS "REVEALED."

The apostle Peter encouraged Christians to look forward to the grace that will be given to them when Jesus Christ is "revealed." He said, "*Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed (apokalupsis)*" (1 Peter 1:13).

This verse suggests (as does the preceding verse) that there is a connection between Jesus' being "revealed" and the decisions that will be made at the Judgment. I say this because the "grace" of which Peter spoke is a future grace. He was not speaking of the present grace that God shows to each person who comes to Him through Jesus.

This future “grace” is something on which a child of God should fully set his hope. It is the grace that will be given Him or her when he or she is finally accepted for entrance into God’s eternal home. It will be given at the Judgment.

F. THE SAINTS WILL BE OVERJOYED WHEN JESUS IS “REVEALED.”

The apostle Peter tried to comfort believers who were being persecuted. He said to them, “*But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed (apokalupsis)*” (1 Peter 4:13).

Christians know that they will be “overjoyed” when they see their Lord coming in glory. Their joy will reach its peak when Christ says to each, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Question: “When will this take place?” It will take place at the Judgment (Matthew 25:21,23). Therefore, also 1 Peter 4:13 implies a connection between Christ’s being “revealed” (apokalupsis) and the Judgment.

SUMMING UP THE VERSES CONCERNING JESUS' BEING "REVEALED" (APOKALUPSIS)

The following chart sums up the events that will take place when Jesus is "revealed" (apokalupsis). Each of the verses has in it the noun "apokalupsis" (revelation) or the verb "apokalupto" (I reveal). The purpose of the chart is to show that the return of Jesus will take place in connection with other end-time events.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resurrection	Return	Gathering	Harvesting	Destruction	Judgment	Heaven	Hell
Luke 17: 29-30	"the..... day"		"Son of..... man is revealed"			"destroyed them all"			
1 Cor 1: 7-8	"the day the Lord Jesus Christ"		"our Lord..... Jesus Christ ... revealed"					"be blameless"	
2 Thess 1: 6-8			"Jesus is..... revealed"	"give..... relief to you"	"pay back trouble"				
1 Peter 1:7			"Jesus Christ..... is revealed"					"praise, glory, and honor"	
1 Peter 1: 13			"Jesus Christ..... is revealed"					"grace to be given"	
1 Peter 4: 13			"his glory..... is revealed"					"you may be overjoyed"	

This chart shows some very interesting things about Jesus' being "revealed." It shows that His being "revealed" will occur on "the day," which is the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ," which is the last day. The chart also shows that at the revelation of Jesus Christ His saints will be gathered and given "relief." Further, it shows that when Jesus is "revealed" His enemies will be "destroyed" and "paid back" in the harvesting of the earth. Finally, the chart shows that when Jesus is revealed, His people will be shown to "be blameless," because God will have forgiven them. As a result of which, they will be given "grace" to receive "praise, glory and honor" and they will be "overjoyed."

The verses in the above chart show that Jesus' being "revealed" (apokalupsis) will be "revealed" on the "day of the Lord Jesus Christ." There is no reason to think that Jesus has been "revealed" or ever will be "revealed" prior to His coming to give rest to His people. There is no reason to think that Jesus will be revealed prior to His coming to "destroy" His enemies. Nor is there any reason to think that Jesus will "be revealed" before he comes to give "praise, glory, and honor" to His people. Therefore, there is no reason to think that He will be "revealed" before He comes for the final Judgment. This means that there is no reason to think that Jesus will return to this earth and reign for a thousand years.

II. JESUS WILL BE CAUSED “TO APPEAR” (PHANEROO)

Another Greek word that is used in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ return is the word “phaneroo.” This word means to cause something “to appear” so as to become visible. Therefore, Jesus will “appear” visibly, not in a dream or in a vision. He will be visible to the naked eye. When this takes place, the following end-time phenomena will occur:

A. WHEN JESUS IS “CAUSED TO APPEAR” (PHANEROO) HIS SAINTS WILL BE CAUSED TO APPEAR WITH HIM.

The apostle Paul wrote, *“When Christ, who is your life, appears (phaneroo), then you also will appear (phaneroo) with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

(Note: The NIV translates “phaneroo” in Colossians 3:4 as “to appear,” but I am translating it as “to be caused to appear.” I have two reasons for this.

The first reason is that the verb “phanerothee” in Colossians 3:4 is in the passive voice, which indicates that “Jesus,” being the subject of this sentence, will be acted upon. That is, God will cause Him to appear.

The second reason for translating “phaneroo” as “to cause to appear” is that I want to distinguish it from “epiphaneia” (appearance), which we will look at below.

When the apostle Paul said that Christ’s people in Colosse would “appear with him,” he implied that Christ’s people who had died would be raised. The dead would not be able to appear with Christ (who had been raised) unless they too were raised.

So we see that several end-time events are brought together in Colossians 3:4.

B. JESUS’ DEAR CHILDREN WILL BE CONFIDENT AND UNASHAMED BEFORE JESUS WHEN HE IS “CAUSED TO APPEAR” (PHANEROO).

The Apostle John combined in the following verses two of the expressions that are used in the New Testament to depict Jesus’ return. He wrote, *“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears*

(phanerothee) *we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming (parousia)*” (1 John 2:28).

Question: “When will it be that Christ’s dear children will be ‘confident and unashamed before Him?’” It will be when He is “caused to appear” (phanerothee). At that time, Christ will also be “present” (parousia). Any thought that Jesus might “appear” (phanerothee) before He comes to “be present” (parousia) is done away with by 1 John 2:28.

Now, I concede that if this were the only passage in the New Testament regarding Jesus’ return, one might (wrongly) suppose that the apostle John was possibly speaking of a (supposed) time when Jesus’ people would stand before Him in a kingdom here on this earth. However, the host of passages that link Christ’s return to other end-time events tip the balance in favor of 1 John 2:28 referring to the Judgment.

The time in which people will be either confident or ashamed before Christ will be at the Judgment.

LET US SUM UP THE VERSES CONCERNING JESUS' BEING "CAUSED TO APPEAR" (PHANEROO)

The following chart illustrates what will happen when Jesus will "be caused to appear" (phaneroo):

Scripture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Day	The	Resurrection	Return	Gathering	Harvesting	Destruction	Judgment	Heaven	Hell
Col 3:4		"you also will appear"	"Christ" appears"	"you also will appear"					
1 Joh 2:28			"when he..... appears" (phaneroo) "at his coming" (parousia)				"be confidant and unashamed"		

The above chart indicates that Jesus will "be caused to appear" (phaneroo) in connection with the resurrection of His dead saints and in connection with His gathering from the earth of His living saints and in connection with the final Judgment.

WHAT HAVE WE SEEN SO FAR IN THIS STUDY OF JESUS' RETURN?

So far, we have seen that Jesus' being "revealed" (apokalupto) is connected in the New Testament with His gathering of His saints from the earth and with the Judgment. Now we have just seen Jesus' being "caused to appear" (phaneroo) is also connected with the gathering of His Saints and with the Judgment. Therefore, we conclude that Jesus' being "revealed" (apokalupto) is the same as His being "caused to appear" (phaneroo), even though each has a slightly different shade of meaning.

Jesus' being "revealed" suggests the thought that He is hidden away somewhere and that someone opens a curtain or the door and He is shown to be there. The expression He is "caused to appear" suggests, on the other hand, the He will come suddenly on the scene, perhaps like the sun bursting forth from behind a cloud. The ideas, however, are basically the same. Jesus will not be "revealed" before He is "caused to appear," and he will not be "caused to appear" before He is "revealed."

III. JESUS WILL PUT IN “ANAPPEARANCE” (EPIPHANEIA)

Now we turn to another expression that is used in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ return. The New Testament says that Jesus will “put in an appearance” (epiphaneia).

The idea of Jesus’ “putting in an appearance” (epiphaneia) is basically the same as His “being caused to appear” (phaneroo), except that it has a slightly different shade of meaning. As we saw, “phaneroo” suggests that Jesus will “be caused to appear,” presumably caused by God, while the word “epiphaneia” suggests that Jesus will, of His own accord, show Himself to His people, much as a king shows himself to his people in all of his glory.

Here are some of the things that will occur when Jesus “puts in an appearance” (epiphaneia):

A. JESUS WILL USHER IN OUR BLESSED HOPE AT HIS GLORIOUS “APPEARING” (EPIPHANEIA).

The apostle Paul taught that we should say “No” to ungodliness and live godly in this present age (Titus 2:11-12). He said that we should do these things “*while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing (epiphaneia) of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13).

In this verse the NIV suggests that the “blessed hope” for which we wait is “the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” While it is certainly true that we wait for the “glorious appearing” of God and Jesus Christ, their appearing may not be the “blessed hope” of which the apostle Paul spoke in this verse.

The apostle Paul may have said that we are waiting for two things. One is the “blessed hope” and the other is the “glorious appearing” of our Lord and Savior. Taken this way, the verse indicates that there will be a temporal connection between Jesus’ “putting in an appearance” (epiphaneia) and our realizing the “blessed hope.” I think this is the proper way to understand this verse, because the “blessed hope” and “the glorious appearing” are connected in the Greek text by the Greek conjunction “kai,” which suggests that they are of equal importance in the sentence. A Christian does not live in hope that Jesus will return, for he knows that Jesus will return. His hope is that he will be permitted to live with Him when He returns.

B. WHEN JESUS PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE (EPIPHANEIA) HE WILL OVERTHROW “THE LAWLESS ONE.”

The Bible says that an extremely wicked man will arise. In the NIV, this man is called the “lawless one.” Some versions call him “the man of sin.” The “lawless one” (or “man of sin”) will set himself up in God’s temple and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Concerning this man, the apostle Paul wrote, “*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor (epiphaneia) of his coming (parousia)*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The NIV translates “epiphanei” as “splendor” but this is not satisfactory. New American Standard Bible is better, which says “by the appearance” of his coming.

So we find two of the expressions that describe Jesus’ return used together in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. They are: His “putting in an appearance” (epiphaneia) and His “coming” (parousia). This suggests that these two expressions show the same basic concept.

This verse (2 Thessalonians 2:8) says that when Jesus’ “puts in an appearance” (epiphaneia), and is “present” (parousia), He will “overthrow” and “destroy” of “the lawless one.” The statement that Jesus will “overthrow” the “the lawless one” almost certainly refers to “the lawless” one’s being “harvested” from the earth.

The statement, however, that Jesus will “destroy” the “lawless one” could possibly refer to “the lawless” one’s being consigned to his eternal fate. In either case, this verse connects Jesus’ return with ultimate events of the end time.

Such a statement as we find in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 leaves no time for a millennium after Jesus’ return, for when He returns He will immediately put an end to all evil and not wait a thousand years to do it.

C. CHRISTIANS ARE SUPPOSED TO LIVE WITHOUT SPOT OR BLAME UNTIL JESUS “PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE” (EPIPHANEIA)

The apostle Paul urged Timothy to flee from sin, to pursue righteousness, to fight a good fight, and to take hold of eternal life (1 Timothy 6:11-13). He also urged Timothy, “*to keep this command*

without spot or blame until the appearing (epiphaneia) of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Timothy 6:14).

Question: When will it make the most difference whether or not a person has a “spot or blame?” Surely, it will make the most difference at the Judgment, because a person’s eternal destiny will be decided at that time. This verse (1 Timothy 6:14) suggests, therefore, that there will be a connection between Jesus’ “putting in an appearance” (epiphaneia) and His judging.

D. JESUS WILL GIVE THE APOSTLE PAUL A CROWN WHEN HE (JESUS) “PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE” (EPIPHANEIA)

The apostle Paul was confident that his hope in Jesus was not misplaced. For that reason he was confident that the Lord would give him “the crown of righteousness” when He (Jesus) “puts in an appearance” (epiphaneia). Paul wrote, “*Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (epiphaneia)*” (2 Timothy 4:8).

This verse suggests a connection between Jesus’ “putting in an appearance” (epiphaneia) “on that day” and Jesus’ awarding crowns at the Judgment.

SUMMING UP THE VERSES CONCERNING JESUS' "PUTTING IN AN APPEARANCE" (EPIPHANEIA)

The following chart illustrates what will happen when Jesus "puts in an appearance" (epiphaneia):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture	The Resurrection Day	Return	Gathering	Harvesting	Destruction	Judgment	Heaven	Hell	
Titus 2:13			"glorious....."					"blessed hope"	
2 Thess 2:8			"by the splendor (epiphaneia) of his coming" (parousia)		"Lord Jesus will overthrow" "and destroy"				
1 Tim 6:14			"until the"					"without spot or blame"	
2 Tim 4:8	"on that day"		"at his....."					"will award to me"	

Let us sum up what we learn from the above chart. It becomes apparent from the chart when Jesus puts in His "appearance" (epiphaneia), He will "overthrow and destroy" the "lawless one." We know from other verses (Revelation 19:20) that His overthrowing and destroying the lawless one will be a part of His harvesting of the earth.

The above verses show that when Jesus puts in His appearance He will sit in judgment and when He sits in Judgment He will reward His faithful servants.

These end-time events will not only take place in connection with Jesus' putting in an "appearance" (epiphaneia) but also, as we have seen, in connection with His being "revealed" (apokalupsis) and with His "being present" (parousia). For this reason, we conclude that the expressions for His "appearing," and for His being "revealed," and for His "being present" all describe the same thing. Each expression describes one aspect of His coming. They do not indicate that He will return at different times and in different ways. Instead, they show, since they all refer to the same return and that He is to return only once, which is also taught in Hebrews 9:28.

IV. JESUS WILL “BE SEEN” (ORAO)

Now, here is another word that is used in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ return. It is the verb “orao,” which means, “I (will) see” Jesus.

Human beings saw Jesus’ glory (John 1:14) for the first time when He came into the world as a baby and grew to be a man. When Jesus comes again, it will be the second time that human beings will see Him (Revelation 1:7). He came the first time to take away sins. He will come the second time to bring salvation to those who wait for Him. The book of Hebrews speaks of this. It says, “*so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear (ophtheesetai) a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him*” (Hebrews 9:28).

The NIV translates the Greek word “ophtheesetai” as “will appear.” “Ophtheesetai” is a future passive form of the verb “orao,” which means “I see. The future passive form of “orao” means, “He will be seen.”

Notice that Jesus will bring salvation at the time that He “will be seen” (orao) for the second time. To hear that Jesus will bring salvation when He comes again will sound strange to anyone who believes that final and eternal salvation is received the moment a person believes. This passage suggests, however, as do many other passages in the New Testament, that there is a further salvation, which will take place when Jesus returns. He will save people (His people) from the destruction that is coming upon the earth.

THE FOLLOWING CHART ILLUSTRATES WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN JESUS IS SEEN” (orao) AGAIN

Scripture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Day	The Resurrection	Return	Gathering	Harvesting	Destruction	Judgment	Heaven	Hell	
Heb 9:28			“he will..... appear” (orao)						“to bring salvation”

This verse suggests that Jesus will not be seen on earth again until He comes to save His people. It nullifies any thought that Jesus would be seen before His Second Coming.

The verse harmonizes nicely with other verses that we have looked at concerning Jesus' return. As we saw in the section concerning "epiphaneia," Jesus' "putting in an appearance" (epiphaneia) will usher in the blessed hope of believers. The study of "orao" shows that when He "is seen" (orao), He will bring salvation. Salvation is the blessed hope of believers. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus' "putting in an appearance" (epiphaneia) is the same as His "being seen" (orao).

V. JESUS WILL "COME (ERCHOMAI / ELTHEIN) BACK"

The New Testament speaks of Jesus' return in yet another way. It says that He is "coming" (erchomai) back. Here is a list of things that will transpire when He "comes" (erchomai / elthein) back:

A. JESUS WILL TAKE HIS PEOPLE TO BE WITH HIM WHEN HE "COMES BACK"

Jesus told His disciples that He would return and take them to be with Him. He said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come (erchomai) back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:3).

This lovely passage shows that when Jesus "comes" (erchomai) back He will take His people so that they can be where He is. The passage connects Jesus' "coming" (erchomai) with the gathering of His saints, as does the following passage.

Jesus also said, *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming (erchomenon) on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other"* (Matthew 24:30-31).

This passage also connects the "coming" (erchomai) of Jesus (the Son of Man) with the gathering of His "elect" (people) from the earth.

B. THE JUDGMENT WILL TAKE PLACE WHEN JESUS "COMES" (ERCHOMAI) BACK

When Jesus “comes” (erchomai) back, each person will be rewarded according to what he has done. Jesus said, *“For the Son of Man is going to come (erchesthai) in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done”* (Matthew 16:27).

Here, we see that Jesus connected the “coming” (erchomai) of the Son of Man with each person’s being rewarded according to what he has done. When Jesus spoke of a “reward” being given to “each person according to what he has done,” he implied the Judgment. Thus Jesus’ “coming”(erchomai) is brought into connection with the Judgment.

C. JESUS WILL SIT ON HIS JUDGMENT THRONE WHEN HE COMES BACK

When Jesus “comes” (elthein) back, He will sit on His throne, from which He will judge the peoples of the earth. Jesus said, *“When the Son of Man comes (elthee) in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats”* (Matthew 25:31-32).

In these verses (Matthew 25:31-32), the Greek word “elthee” is found. “Elthein” is a word that is often associated with the verb “erchomai,” because “erchomai” is defective in some of its tenses. This is another of the passages that tie Jesus’ “coming” (elthein) with the Judgment.

D. JESUS WILL BRING EVERYTHING TO LIGHT WHEN HE COMES BACK

What we are finding, as we go along through these passages is that Jesus Himself made a connection between His “coming” again and the final Judgment. The apostle Paul made the same connection. Paul wrote, *“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes (elthee). He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God”* (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Here the apostle Paul connected the “coming” (elthein) of the Lord with the Judgment.

E. WICKED PEOPLE WILL BE DESTROYED AND SHUT OUT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE JESUS WHEN HE COMES BACK

Question: “What is it that will happen to wicked people when Jesus comes again?” The apostle Paul supplied the answer. He said, *“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed (apokalupsei) from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes (elthee) to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you”* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

This is a very important passage for understanding the end time. It is important because it connects Jesus’ “coming” (elthein) to His “being revealed” (apokalupsis). It shows that both words describe the same thing. This passage (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8) is important for another reason, too. It identifies Jesus’ “coming” (elthein) with the punishment of wicked people.

This passage leaves no room for a period of a thousand years during which Jesus will reign on earth. He will come not to reign but to judge. His coming will be at the very end of time, not at the beginning of a thousand-year period. When He comes, He will sit in judgment and consign some people to bliss and others to eternal doom. He will come to the earth, not to set up a kingdom on earth, but to take His saints home with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At that time, Christ will turn the kingdom over to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28).

SUMMING UP THE VERSES SAY RELATIVE TO JESUS’ “COMING” (ERCHOMAI / ELTHEIN) BACK

The following chart illustrates what will happen when Jesus “comes” (erchomai / elthein) back:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture	The	Resurrection	Return	Gathering	Harvest-	Destruc-	Judgment	Heaven	Hell
	Day				ing	tion			
John 14:3			“I will....“and take“you...“					
			come	you”				may be	
			back”					where	
								I am”	

Matt 24: 30-31	“see the...“gather Son of his Man elect” coming”
Matt 16: 27	“going to.....“he will come” reward”
Matt 25: 31	“comes in..... “sit on his glory” his throne”
1 Cor 4: 5	“till the.....“will bring Lord comes” to light”
2 Thess 1:8-10 the presence of the Lord”	“the day.....“shut he comes” out from

These passages show that when Jesus comes back, He will perform end-time deeds:

He will gather His elect;
He will sit in judgment;
He will take some people to heaven;
and He will consign others to hell.

All of these things He will do when He “comes” back.

VI. JESUS WILL “COME DOWN” (KATABAINO)

The New Testament speaks of the return of Jesus in yet another way. It says that He will “come down” (katabaino) from heaven. Here is what the apostle Paul said: “*For the Lord himself will come down (katabaino) from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Here is a chart that shows the connection of Jesus’ coming down from heaven and the resurrection of those in Christ who will have died:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture	The	Resurrection	Return	Gathering	Harvesting	Destruction	Judgment	Heaven	Hell

Day

1 Thess: “dead in “will come
4:16 Christ down from
 will rise” heaven”

When the New Testament speaks of Jesus’ “coming down” from heaven, it has the same import as when it speaks of His “being caused to appear.” I say this, because (as we saw) in Colossians 3:4, His “being caused to appear” (phaneroo) is connected with His raising of the dead.

Here, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, we see that His “coming down” (katabaino) is also connected with His raising of the dead.

We shall also see, shortly, that Jesus’ raising of the dead is connected with His being “present” (parousia).

When the apostle Paul said that Jesus would “come down from heaven” he did not mean that Jesus would come down to earth and stay any period of time. We know that Paul did not mean that, for in the very next verse he said that when Jesus comes, Jesus’ people who are still alive on earth would be caught up in the clouds and be ever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

VII. JESUS WILL BE “PRESENT” (PAROUSIA)

Another of the Greek words that the New Testament uses to describe Jesus’ return is “parousia.” It means “to be present” or “to be along side.” Taken by itself, it might lend credence to the idea that Jesus will be present on earth for a while. The context, however, in which this word is used will not allow such an interpretation.

While it is true that the word “parousia” does seem to have royal implications, it does not necessarily suggest that Jesus would take up royal residence on earth when He comes. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. “Parousia” suggests a king who moves around. It suggests a king that is sometimes present with His subjects in one place and at other times with other subjects.

Here is a list of what will take place in connection with Jesus’ “parousia” (presence).

A. JESUS’ PRESENCE (PAROUSIA) WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The apostle Paul wrote that the dead would be raised in a certain sequence. He said, “*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming (parousia)*” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

B. JESUS’ PRESENCE (PAROUSIA) WILL SET THE STAGE FOR THE GATHERING OF HIS PEOPLE

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “*Now, brethren, concerning the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come*” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).

This passage shows that the gathering of Jesus’ people from the earth will be concurrent with His being present (parousia). The gathering will take place on a day that is here called “the day of the Lord.” This passage draws

two of the end-time events together. It shows that the Lord will “be present” (parousia) on “the day of the Lord.”

Notice how nicely all of this fits together: When God decides that the time has come for Christ to return, the righteous dead will be raised and Christ will bring the resurrected saints with Him. When His “presence” (parousia) has become a reality, He will send forth His angels to gather His saints from the earth in order to unite them with His resurrected saints.

There is an additional passage that points out even more clearly than this one that the Lord’s being “present” (parousia) will be connected with the resurrection of the dead and the gathering of His saints.

The apostle Paul wrote, *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming (parousia) of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend (katabaino) from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Notice the order of events as described here. (1) The dead in Christ will rise first. (2) The Lord will descend from heaven. (3) Those who remain on the earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (4) They will be united with the resurrected saints. (5) They will always be with the Lord. There is no room in such a schedule for an interval during which Christ would reign on earth for a thousand years.

C. JESUS’ PRESENCE (PAROUSIA) WILL CAUSE THE ‘LAWLESS ONE’ TO BE CONSUMED

The “lawless one,” or the “man of sin,” will not be destroyed until Jesus is present (parousia), but when He is present, look out! Paul wrote, *“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness (epiphaneia) of His coming (parousia)”* (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

The translation of this verse in the NIV shows some distortion. The Greek word “epiphania” does not literally mean “brightness.” It means “appearance.” Taken literally, this verse should read, “whom the Lord will...destroy with the appearance of his coming.” Thus, the verse shows

that Jesus' being "present" (parousia) will be concurrent with His "appearing" (epiphaneia). Notice that both of these expressions are connected in the above verse with the harvesting of wicked people from the earth.

The harvesting of wicked people has previously been identified in this study with the "revelation" (apokalupsis) of Jesus. See Luke 17:29-30. From this we can conclude that Jesus' "presence" (parousia), His "appearing" (epiphaneia), and His "revelation" (apokalupsis) are different expressions that apply to the same event.

B. JESUS' PRESENCE (PAROUSIA) WILL USHER IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The apostle Paul was looking forward to the "presence" (parousia) of Jesus. He knew when Jesus is present, he (Paul) would rejoice over the salvation of those that he had influenced to believe in Jesus. Paul said, "*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (parousia)*" (1 Thessalonians 2:19)?

This verse connects Christ's presence (parousia) with the joy that the apostle Paul will experience on the Day of Judgment. Previously, in this study, we identified the Day of Judgment with several events. We identified it with:

The "revelation" (apokalupsis) of Jesus,
 Jesus' being caused to appear (phaneroo),
 Jesus' making an "appearance" (epiphaneia),
 Jesus' being "seen" (orao),
 and with Jesus' "coming" (erchomai / elthein) back.

This reconfirms the thought that these terms all refer to the same thing and each of them highlights a different aspect of Jesus' return.

An additional passage that connects Jesus' presence (parousia) with the Judgment is 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13. The apostle Paul was anxious to have Christian people be considered blameless and holy. He said, "*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes (parousia) with all his holy ones*" (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).

We have here a further strengthening of the thought that when Jesus is finally present He will sit in judgment.

The apostle Paul prayed that God would make the brethren in Thessalonika completely holy so that they might be found blameless in spirit, soul, and body. Paul wrote, *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This verse indicates that when Jesus’ is present (parousia), some people will be found blameless. Question: “When will an investigation be made to determine whether people are blameless or not?” Answer: It will be at the Day of Judgment.

We have still one more verse that links Jesus’ appearing (parousia) with the Judgment. The apostle John wrote, *“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears (phaneroo), we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (parousia)”* (1 John 2:28).

This verse links Jesus’ being “present” (parousia) with His being “caused to appear” (phaneroo). It is logical that Jesus will “be present” (parousia) after He has been “caused to appear” (phaneroo).

The apostle John assured his “little children” that they would not be ashamed before the Lord provided they abide in Him. The day on which some will be ashamed and some will not be ashamed is the Day of Judgment.

We conclude, then, that the Judgment will take place at a time:

When Jesus’ “is revealed” (apokalupsis),
 When He has been “being caused to appear” (phaneroo),
 When He has “put in an “appearance” (epiphaneia),
 When he “comes” (erchomai / elthein) back,
 and when Jesus “is present” (parousia).

Since all of these expressions are connected with the final Judgment, they show that the King will come to His subjects, not to reign over them on earth, but to rescue them from destruction.

HERE IS A RECAPITULATION OF THIS STUDY OF JESUS' RETURN

I. JESUS WILL "BE REVEALED" (APOKALUPSIS)

Scripture	1 The Day	2 Resurrection	3 Return	4 Gathering	5 Harvesting	6 Destruction	7 Judgment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
Luke 17: 29-30	"the..... day"		"Son of Man..... is revealed"						"destroyed them all"
1 Cor 1: 7-8	"the day the Lord Jesus Christ"		"our Lord..... Jesus Christ ... revealed"						"be blameless"
2 Thess 1: 6-8			"Jesus is..... revealed"	"give..... relief"	"pay back trouble" to you"				
1 Peter 1:7			"Jesus Christ..... is revealed"						"praise, glory, and honor"
1 Peter 1: 13			"Jesus Christ..... is revealed"						"grace to be given"
1 Peter 4: 13			"his glory..... is revealed"						"you may be overjoyed"

II. JESUS WILL "BE CAUSED TO APPEAR" (PHANEROO)

Scripture	1 The Day	2 Resurrection	3 Return	4 Gathering	5 Harvesting	6 Destruction	7 Judgment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
Col 3:4		"you also will appear"	"Christ" appears"	"you also will appear"					
1 Joh 2:28			"when he..... appears (phaneroo)" "at his coming (parousia)"						"be confidant and unashamed"

V. JESUS WILL “COME” (ERCHOMAI / ELTHEIN) AGAIN

Scripture	1 The Day	2 Resurrection	3 Return	4 Gathering	5 Harvesting	6 Destruction	7 Judgment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
John 14:3			“I will come back”	“and take you”				“you...may be where I am”	
Matt 24: 30-31			“see the Son of Man coming”	“gather his elect”					
Matt 16: 27			“going to come”					“he will reward”	
Matt 25: 31			“comes in his glory”					“sit on his throne”	
1 Cor 4:5 2 Thess 1:8-10			“till the Lord comes” “the day he comes”					“will bring to light”	“shut out from the presence of the Lord”

VI. JESUS WILL “COME DOWN” (KATABAINO)

Scripture	1 The Day	2 Resurrection	3 Return	4 Gathering	5 Harvesting	6 Destruction	7 Judgment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
1 Thess: 4:16			“dead in Christ will rise”	“will come down from heaven”					

VII. JESUS WILL “BE PRESENT” (PAROUSIA)

Scripture	1 The Day	2 Resurrection	3 Return	4 Gathering	5 Harvesting	6 Destruction	7 Judgment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
1 Cor 15: 22-23		“all.. made alive”	“at His coming (parousia)”						
1 Thess 4: 15-16		“the dead in Christ will rise first”	“until the coming (parousia) of the Lord”	“caught up together with them”					
2 Thess 2: 1-2	“the..... day of the Lord”		“coming.... (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ”	“our gathering together to him”					
2 Thess 2: 8			“bright-..... ness of his coming parousia)”			“whom the Lord will consume”			
1 Thess 2:19			“Jesus Christ at his coming (parousia)”				“our hope, or joy, or crown”		
1 Thess 3: 12-13			“when our..... Lord Jesus comes (parousia)”				“be blameless and holy”		
1 Thess 5: 23			“coming..... (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ”				“spirit, soul, body be preserved blameless”		
1John 2:28			“when he appears (phaneroo)” “at His coming (parousia)”				“not be ashamed”		

**THIS CHART IS DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE THAT THE
EXPRESSION DESCRIBING THE RETURN OF JESUS ARE LINKED
TO THE END TIME**

	REVELA- TION <small>(apokalupsis)</small>	CAUSED TO APPEAR <small>(phaneroo)</small>	APPEAR- ANCE <small>(epiphaneia)</small>	BE SEEN <small>(orao)</small>	WILL COME <small>(erchomai)</small>	COME DOWN <small>(katabaino)</small>	BE PRESENT <small>(parousia)</small>
The Day	Lk 17:29-30 1 Cor 1:7-8						2 Thess 2:1-2

Resurrection of the dead		Col 3:4				1 Thess 4:16	1 Cor 15:22-23 1 Thess 4:15-16

Gather- ing	2 Thess 1:6-8	Col 3:4			Matt 24:30-31 Joh 14:3		1 Thess 4:15-16 2 Thess 2:1-2

Harvest- ing	Lk 17:29-30 2 Thess 1:6-8		2 Thess 2:8				2 Thess 2:8

Judgment	1 Cor 1:7-8 1 Pet 1:7 1 Pet 1:13 1 Pet 1:13 1 Pet 4:13	1 John 2:28	1 Tim 6:14 2 Tim 4:8		Matt 16:27 Matt 25:31 1 Cor 4:5		1 Thess 2:19 1 Thess 3:12-13 1 Thess 5:23 1 John 2:28

Heaven					Heb 9:28	John 14:3	

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CHART

The various expressions that are used in the New Testament to describe Jesus' return are all linked to the same end-time events. If they are linked to the same end-time events, they must, then, be linked to each other. For example, passages concerning the Day are linked to the "revelation" (apokalupsis) of Jesus Christ and to His being "present" (parousia). Notice the above chart.

Further, passages concerning the resurrection of the dead are linked to Jesus' being caused to "appear" (phaneroo), to His "coming down" (katabaino) from heaven, and to His being "present" (parousia).

Also, passages concerning the gathering of the elect are linked to the “revelation” (apokalupsis) of Jesus, to His being caused to “appear” (phaneroo), to His “coming” (erchomai/elthein), and to His being “present” (parousia).

In addition, passages concerning the Harvesting of wicked people from the earth are linked to the “revelation” (apokalupsis) of Jesus and to His putting in an “appearance” (epiphaneia) and to His being “present” (parousia).

What is more, passages concerning the Judgment are linked to Jesus’ being “revealed” (apokalupsis) and to His being caused to “appear” (phaneroo) and to His putting in an “appearance” (epiphaneia) and to His “coming” (erchomai/elthein) again and to His being “present” (parousia).

Finally, passages concerning Heaven are linked to Jesus’ being “seen” (orao) and to His “coming” (erchomai/elthein) again.

Now it goes without saying that things that are contemporary with the same things are contemporary with each other. Therefore, all these expressions refer to the same event. The only difference between them is that they have slightly different shades of meaning. Their being contemporary indicates that Jesus’ being “revealed” and His being caused to “appear” and His putting in an “appearance” and His “coming” again and His “coming down” and His being “present” will all happen together.

When He returns He will bring His resurrected saints with Him and gather from the earth those of His saints who are still living on the earth. He will then harvest the remaining people from the earth, those who do not know God and have not obeyed the gospel. Then the earth will be destroyed and all men will appear before God’s throne for judgment, following which a final distribution of them will be made.

Consequently, the return of Jesus should not to be viewed as the time at which He will begin to reign on earth for a while. Rather it should be viewed as a signal that the end has come.