



**THE SECOND
COMING OF
THE LORD
JESUS CHRIST!**

1. Introductory Remarks:

It was never my plan to set out to write on the second coming. After all, the view that I had held to was well represented in many books and videos. From the first days of my spiritual birth I was taught and grounded in dispensational teaching, which, of course, included a belief in a pre-tribulation rapture for the “church”. This would be followed by a seven year tribulation period that would end with a glorious appearing of Christ to judge the world. I never questioned “the system” that I had been taught. In fact, whenever I read the various proof texts, the terms and phrases were interpreted in light of that system, though I did not realize it at the time. For example, whenever I read of “great tribulation”, I immediately interpreted that as a seven year period of time. Whenever, I read of Christ coming in regard to the saints, I interpreted that as a secret rapture of the church.

It was while studying and teaching through the book of Matthew that my foundation would be shaken. I was approaching Matthew 24 and was going to turn to a few proof texts to show that we’d be raptured out of here before the events of Matthew 24. To my dismay, none of the proof texts, that I always turned to regarding the rapture, actually stated the timing of the rapture. In fact, only one passage - 1 Cor. 15:52 - spoke directly regarding the timing. It said, “... at the last trumpet...”. I decided that I needed to study out the issue more closely.

I had no idea, when I began this study, the internal stress and strain that I would be put through. Change is never easy. However, I have a strong desire to be true to the Word of God, regardless of the cost.

My first approach to a solution was to bring home several books from various viewpoints. Many of the authors had some convincing arguments. They all had their various proof texts that they would turn to after putting various thoughts into your mind which would then taint the way you would read the passage. I was tossed to and fro and wondered how I could ever know what was true. Where would I get the straight answers? I decided that I would look to the Bible alone to see what God Himself clearly states. I realized that it would not be easy to read the passages totally objectively, as I had so many pre-established interpretations. My goal remained, however, that I would try to see exactly what God stated and try to remove any preconceived ideas until they were firmly established by the Scriptures themselves.

What follows is the procedure that I followed in my study. I have laid it out, in the desire that other “Bereans” might study out the passages and be encouraged by what our God has revealed to us. This will not be simply something you can read. You must do the work. If you seriously desire to know and be grounded in that which is true, all the verses must be read and observed in their context. Only that which is absolutely clear must be held to dogmatically. We do not want to accept any interpretation that rests upon mere probability. I have come to believe that it is better to have no explanation at all for a difficult passage than to accept one which may turn out to be wrong. For, it is not easy to give up an idea once we have committed ourselves to it, as I know from experience.

2. Laying the Foundation

We all come to the Bible with certain presuppositions (i.e. things we presuppose to be true). Because these presuppositions are the building blocks or foundational stones upon which we build and add to, it is absolutely crucial that they come out of clear Bible teaching. Everything that we read will be fitted upon these foundational building blocks (presuppositions). If our foundation blocks are off, then everything else will be off the mark as we build upon this foundation. The one place that you don’t want to be in error is in a very foundational belief. Therefore, it is vitally important to make sure that all your presuppositions are established by clear - black and white - teaching of Scripture. You don’t ever want to have a foundation stone that is likely true, or could be true. You want your foundation to be built on truths that are established without a doubt. I determined to discard any presuppositions that I had that could not be squarely established from specific passages of God’s Word.

A. Presupposition #1

The first presupposition that I established was: The Bible is God’s Word and thus is true. 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; John 17:17 are among a few of the many verses of Scripture which clearly establish this as a biblical presupposition. Thus, the Bible gives us the authoritative truth that we can look to regarding the second coming.

B. Presupposition #2

The second presupposition that I set out to check was: Jesus Christ is coming again. I figured there would be no point in spending a great deal of time in a study of the second coming if that was a presupposition that could not be clearly established from Scripture - which of course it can (i.e. Heb. 9:28; Acts 1:11; John 14:3).

I mention these presuppositions only to show you that I was not going to take anything for granted. I wanted all my beliefs to be grounded solidly on clear biblical teaching.

C. Presupposition #3

Thirdly, I determined that I did not want to add nor take away from the Scripture (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). Once we go beyond the Scripture, we are on very shaky footing. In order to stay true to Scripture, I determined to follow 1 Cor. 2:13, by speaking in the words which the Holy Spirit chose to use in revealing the truth about any topic to us. How did the Holy Spirit reveal the truth? What words, under inspiration, were selected to express what He wanted known.

Thus, I began my study, prayerfully and humbly submitted to whatever God would be pleased to reveal in His Word.

3. “Tribulation”

I had to start somewhere, so I chose to use “tribulation” as my starting reference point. After all, I thought, most of my belief surrounding the second coming was referenced around what I had been taught - that there would be a seven year period of time called the great tribulation. Everything else seemed to be fitted in with reference to this event. So, carefully trying to establish my presuppositions from clear Bible texts, I decided to look up every reference to the Greek Word “thlipsis” (which is the word that the Holy Spirit used and which is translated “tribulation”). In so doing I would be able to see if indeed the scripture clearly taught a seven year period called the tribulation in which God would pour out judgment upon the world through great catastrophes. After all, if this is going to be a foundational reference point, I didn’t want any “maybe’s” or “possibly’s” or even “probably’s”. I wanted clear, laid out teaching.

First, take a Greek dictionary or other study tool to look up the meaning of the word “thlipsis” (tribulation - Strong’s #2347). Remember that words are very “plastic” and so context is most important.

You will find that the word comes from a word meaning “pressure”. It is translated by words like “tribulation,” “affliction,” “trouble,” and “persecution.”

Look up all the following references and draw your own conclusions based on clear teaching. If you have an Englishman’s Greek concordance, you can look up all the references where a particular Greek word is used. This is all I did. Be sure to read the surrounding verses to catch the context.

- Matt. 13:21 (notice tribulation or persecution because of the Word and it causes some to fall away)
- Matt. 24:9 (notice the context: verse 3, they asked about His coming [parousia] and the end of the age [literally: the completion of this age]. Notice what happens in v. 10:13. Do you see any parallel with Matt. 13:21?)

In both the above passages, who receives tribulation? Why are they persecuted?

- Matt. 24:21 (Notice “then” - When? See v. 15 - don’t try to interpret it yet, just observe! Again, who is being persecuted or tribulated in the context? Is any length of time given? Observe parallel passage in Luke 21:5-28) Who is doing the “tribulating”?
- Matt. 24:29 (Notice: “after the tribulation.” See context of v. 30-31. Notice the coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Notice in verse 31 - angels, trumpet, and gathering of the elect. Notice also the context of verse 36. What day does no one know? The day of Christ’s “parousia” - His coming with power after the tribulation of those days previously mentioned. A day of judgment as in Noah’s day - v. 37 and following)
- Mark 4:17
- Mark 13:19, 24 (Notice context of v. 25-27 and parallel to Matt.)
- John 16:21 (notice context of verses 20-22. What a great promise for those going through tribulation and trouble!)
- John 16:33 (notice who will have tribulation. Can you be of good cheer -even in tribulation? Are believers to expect tribulation in the world? Can they have peace in the midst of it? Why?)

- Acts 7:10, 11
- Acts 11:19
- Acts 14:22
- Acts 20:23
- Rom. 2:9 (notice wrath and tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil. Notice context of Rom. 2:5)
- Rom 5:3
- Rom. 8:35 (Look at context of v. 36! and v. 37-39! Going through tribulation does not separate us from the love of God! Are we more than conquerors even in tribulation and persecution unto death?)
- Rom 12:12
- 1 Cor. 7:28
- 2 Cor. 1:4 (used twice)
- 2 Cor. 1:8
- 2 Cor. 2:4
- 2 Cor. 4:17
- 2 Cor. 6:4
- 2 Cor. 7:4 (Can a believer rejoice in tribulation?)
- 2 Cor. 8:2,13
- Eph. 3:13
- Phil. 1:16
- Phil. 4:14
- Col. 1:24
- 1 Thess. 1:6

- 1 Thess. 3:3 (Notice the same root word used in verse 4. What are we as believers appointed to? Are we appointed to escape tribulation or appointed to suffer tribulation?)
- 1 Thess. 3:7 (Can there be comfort in tribulation?)
- 2 Thess. 1:4, 6 (Again in verse 4 who is being “tribulated”? In verses 6 and 7, the root word is used also. God promises to give an ultimate affliction or tribulation to their tribulators. Literally, God is saying that He will tribulate those who are tribulating you. When? When will the tribulated saints have rest? Notice verse 7 gives the answer. Read verses 7-12 which describes in more detail the working out of the promise of v. 6. Notice also in Ch. 2:1-3, where Paul describes this day when the saints enter their rest and the unbelievers receive vengeance. Notice again the timing of that day - after the “falling away” - remember the falling away spoken of in Matt. 13 and 24, and Mark 4 and 13. Remember there too it spoke of the gathering of the saints at the parousia (coming of the Lord in power and great glory).
- Heb. 10:33 (again notice who is receiving tribulation. From whom are they receiving tribulation? Notice as well the context of v. 34-39 in light of “falling away”).
- James 1:27
- Rev. 1:9 (John is a companion in what?)
- Rev. 2:9,10 (Who receives tribulation here?)
- Rev. 2:22 (Notice her particular affliction is given in verse 23)
- Rev. 7:14 (Notice again who was persecuted in the great tribulation from which they had come out.)

That is every reference to the word tribulation (thlipsis) in the New Testament Scriptures. Did you see a particular seven year period? What are your conclusions about tribulation that you can see come clearly from the Word of God?

Though Rev. 13:5-10 is true, the saints endure (the literal rendering of “patience”) because of their faith and the knowledge of what will occur to those of the world (Rev. 13:10; 2 Thess. 1:4-12; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 8:15-19!) Calling to mind the end result of Rev. 14:9-16 enables the believer to endure! “This is the endurance [patience] of the saints...”

(Read also Matt. 10:24-39; John 17:14-15; John 15:18- 16:4; Phil. 1:27-30)

4. “Coming” (parousia)

The second word that I studied was the word “parousia”. Look up the meaning of this word in a Greek dictionary or other study tool (coming [parousia] - Strong’s #3952). Remember that words are very “plastic” and so context is most important.

You will find that the word comes from a word meaning “presence”. It is almost always translated by the word “coming.” A couple of times it is translated simply as “presence.” It can refer to an official arrival which introduces the presence of a ruler or dignitary.

Look up all the following references (which is every place in the New Testament Scriptures where this particular word is used) and draw your own conclusions based on clear teaching. Be sure to read the surrounding verses to catch the context.

- Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39 (As you read the context of all of these verses answer the following questions, and others that you can think of: Will His parousia be secret or glorious? Will there be judgment on the day of His parousia? Will some be taken by surprise by His parousia? Will He also gather His elect on the day of His parousia?)
- 1 Cor. 15:23 (Notice the context of v. 18-23. What is said to occur at Christ’s coming [parousia]? Is it not the resurrection of those who are Christ’s? Notice v. 51-52 state that it will be at the last trump and v. 23 states it will be at Christ’s parousia. The last trump must be at Christ’s parousia, which is described in Matt. 24. Reread Matt. 24:29-31 which is also describing the parousia - Christ’s glorious coming.)
- 1 Cor. 16:17
- 2 Cor. 7:6
- 2 Cor. 10:10
- Phil. 1:26
- Phil. 2:12
- 1 Thess. 2:19 (What event does Paul look forward to?)
- 1 Thess. 3:13 (Saints means “holy ones”. This could be referring to angels, saints, or both.)

- 1 Thess. 4:15 (Notice the context in v. 14 - which fits with 1 Thess. 3:13. Notice also the context of the following verses. We see Him coming on the clouds, with holy ones and the trump. Also remember, Paul's original letter did not have a chapter division after v. 18. The context continues on into what is called chapter 5 (i.e. notice the exhortation of comfort again in ch. 5:11). Notice the continued reference to that "day".)
- 1 Thess. 5:23 (Notice again the day Paul looks forward to as a son of the day!)
- 2 Thess. 2:1 (Again notice the consistency - where we have the parousia [coming] together with the gathering of the saints [resurrection]. Notice the timing of that day as given in v. 2-3 of this chapter. This is again consistent with Matt. 24:29-31 and all the other passages that we looked at. Notice also "that day" described in 2 Thess. 1:7-12).
- 2 Thess. 2:8 (Notice the brightness of His coming [parousia] - compare with Mt. 24:27)
- 2 Thess. 2:9 (This is the official coming [parousia] of the lawless one who is the one mentioned in v. 3-4, 8, 10).
- James 5:7, 8 (Notice the day that the saints look forward to. Notice the context of v. 9 - judgment ; and the context of v. 10-12 - enduring suffering until that day).
- 2 Peter 1:16 (Notice the context of this parousia - referring to Christ manifesting Himself in power as King at His transfiguration.)
- 2 Peter 3:4 (Again read the whole context. His coming is a day of judgment - but not for us, beloved!)
- 2 Peter 3:12 (This again is at the parousia).
- 1 John 2:28 (Notice what day John focuses the believers upon).

That is every reference to the word "parousia" [coming] in the New Testament Scriptures. What are your conclusions about the second coming that you can see come clearly from the Word of God? Are the passages consistent with one another?

5. “Appearing” (epiphany)

The third word that I studied was the word “epiphany”. Look up the meaning of this word in a Greek dictionary or other study tool (appearing [epiphany] - Strong’s #2015).

You will find that the word comes from a word meaning “brightness” or “shining” or “light”. It is almost always translated by the word “appearing.” Once it is translated simply as “brightness.” It also can refer to an official arrival of a ruler or dignitary, with the emphasis on it being a notable, glorious, illustrious, and conspicuous event.

Look up all the following references (which is every place in the New Testament Scriptures where this particular word is used) and draw your own conclusions based on clear teaching. Be sure to read the surrounding verses to catch the context.

- 2 Thess. 2:8 (Here epiphany is translated “brightness”. Christ’s parousia will be a bright, glorious, shining event. He will be revealed as the glorious Lord that He is. He will be uncovered in a more complete way than even at His transfiguration - as King of kings and Lord of lords!)
- 1 Tim. 6:14 (Notice the context of “light” in v. 15-16)
- 2 Tim. 1:10 (Here referring to the first coming of Christ - bringing the “light” of the gospel. Notice in v. 9, this was established before time began, but had now (v. 10) appeared (made manifest - now the light had come - it had dawned in Christ’s first appearing) and will be ultimately unveiled and brought to light in “that Day!” (See v. 12))
- 2 Tim. 4:1, 8 (Notice the judgment at His appearing. Notice in v. 8 when Paul says the believers will receive their reward).
- Titus 2:13 (Notice it is the glorious appearing [epiphany] that they are looking for... the same appearing spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:8)

That is every reference to the word “epiphany” [appearing] in the New Testament Scriptures. What are your conclusions about the second coming that you can see come clearly from the Word of God? Are the passages consistent with one another?

6. “Revelation” (apocalypse)

The fourth word that I studied was the word “apocalypse”. Look up the meaning of this word in a Greek dictionary or other study tool (revelation [apocalypse] - Strong’s #602).

You will find that the word comes from a word meaning “to take off the cover; to unveil; to disclose” It is almost always translated by the word “revelation.”

For this word, I have listed all the references which are related to the second coming. Draw your own conclusions based on clear teaching. Be sure to read the surrounding verses to catch the context. (If you desire, look up all the references to this word in a Greek concordance).

- 1 Cor. 1:7 (Notice v. 8 as well. What day are the believers to eagerly anticipate?)
- 2 Thess. 1:7 (Notice again the surrounding context)
- 1 Peter 1:7 (The root word is also used in v. 5. Again, look at the context ... trials...faith...endurance...the end - the revelation of Christ; when He is unveiled in all His glory as the Lord that He is in truth).
- 1 Peter 1:13 (Notice when the fullness of our gracious salvation will be.)
- 1 Peter 4:13 (Here again as you read the context, you can see the consistency of God’s Word - whether it be Peter, Paul, John, James, or any other writer of Scripture).

7. Additional terms to study

Wrath

Somehow in my thinking before, I had always equated “wrath” with the so-called “tribulation period”. Check out some examples of the word “wrath” in the following Scriptures:

(1Thess. 1:10; 5:9; compare with - Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 5:9; Matt. 3:7,12 ; John 3:36; Eph. 5:5-7)

“Thief in the night”

It is interesting to note that all the “thief in the night” passages have to do with Christ’s coming in power and glory to judge and unveil Himself as the King of kings and Lord of lords (i.e. parousia, epiphany, apocalypse - the day of the Lord). Check out the following verses:

(1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Peter 3:10 [see the context of judgment in v. 3-7]; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 16:14-16 [Notice some are blessed when He comes ...those who watch. Clearly, others are “sleeping” even as they are gathering. They are unaware that their doom has come upon them. Be sure to notice that this is “Armageddon” that is just before this day that Jesus comes as a thief.] ; Matt. 24:36 ... compare with v. 29-31 and v. 37-44 and v. 50-51 [It is clearly established here that the day that no one knows the day nor the hour, is the parousia - Christ’s glorious coming in power (a day like the flood of Noah) which is the only second coming that the Scripture clearly unveils].

Meet

The specific word I want to look at is #529 in Strong’s. It is a word that refers to the official going out and welcoming of a dignitary and escorting him back to the place or town from which they had come. (Never do they meet the dignitary and then go back to where the dignitary came from. The dignitary does not change his course, he just has others go out to meet him and join with him.)

See the following verses:

(Matt. 25:1,6; Acts 28:15 Notice Paul does not return to Caesarea, but rather continues to Rome. They joined him and came back to Rome as his companions - to be with him. It is also used in John 12:12-13 [Some Greek manuscripts use a synonym here]. Notice the people met Him and escorted Him back, praising Him. This is the same word for meet that is used in 1 Thess. 4:17! What understanding of “meet” in 1 Thess. 4:17 best fits with the use of this word elsewhere in Scripture?)

8. Conclusions

Though I do not have all the answers, it became very obvious to me as I studied the above passages carefully, that there is one glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be a day of glory for believers and a day of horror for those who are in rebellion to our great King. What is now hidden will be revealed.

I have also come to understand that God's purpose in revealing things to us regarding the future is not to enable us to understand the future in great detail before it actually happens. Prophecy has never been fully understood in advance, nor will it ever be so. God has given us prophecy, not so that we might understand completely His plan or be able to recognize every event as it is fulfilled, but to reveal to us some of what lies ahead, and to assure us that His purposes and promises will be fulfilled.

We do not need to know every event before it happens. We need only to know that God is in control of the future and that He has planned it and is causing all things to work together for His glory and for the good of His saints.



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