

# THE LORD'S APPEARING VERSUS THE LORD'S COMING

By Shane Shaddix

One of the most egregious arguments pre-tribbers use to support their doctrine is that they separate our Lord's appearing from his coming. They teach that his appearing is when he comes in the air to rapture his bride and 7 years later he comes again at the end of this world to establish his kingdom on Earth. This coming again at the end of the world they refer to as the second coming. Many problems exist with this interpretation of scripture.

First of all, the only place in scripture where we actually find the word "second" in reference to our Lord's return is in Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The writer here in verse 28 is contrasting our Lord's second appearing with his first appearing mentioned two verses earlier in verse 26: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Then the writer in chapter 10 and verse 7, quoting Psalm 40, writes "Then said I, Lo, I come..." and in verse 9-10 we find "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Would there be anyone who would argue that this is not referring to our Lord's first coming as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world? I trow not. So if the writer here is referring to our Lord's first appearing as earlier mentioned in 9:26 as "Lo, I come" in 10:7&9, then would not "appeared" of 9:26 be a reference to his first coming, and if so, then would not "appear the second time" of 9:28 be a reference to his second coming?

It seems to be very clear that the writer of this passage understood our Lord's first coming to be his first appearing and that our Lord's second coming will be his second appearing. If the "appear the second time" of 9:28 is not a reference to our Lord's second coming, then we have no scriptural passage which ordaineth our Lord's return as his "second" coming. If the phrase "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" is a reference to our Lord's first appearing as alluded to by verse 28, then it is also a reference to our Lord's first coming as indicated by the writer's quote of Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10:7&9 where the words "I come" are used in reference to the context of 9:26.

So, if 9:26, in which the writer uses the words "he appeared", is referring to our Lord's first coming, and it clearly is, then in verse 28 the writer, by use of the words "appear the second time", infers that the "appeared" of verse 26 was his first appearing. And if this be so, as it clearly seems to be, and if verse 26 is clearly a reference to our Lord's first coming, then verse 28 is by all reason, logic, and deduction, a reference to our Lord's second coming.

Our Lord clearly understood his first appearing to be his coming. Consider the following examples.

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Though this list is in no wise an exhaustive list, it should be sufficient to substantiate that our Lord understood his first appearing to be a coming.

So, if we have established that appearing and coming are both used to refer to the same event, then, would it be safe to say that these two words are used interchangeably? And if this be the case, then would we find other passages in scripture where these two words are used interchangeably? The answer is yes. Here are two such passages in mind. I’ll list the passages and you be the judge.

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and a fullers’ soap:” Malachi 3:2

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and be not ashamed before him at his coming.” I John 2:28

The apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:4 “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

I cannot fathom that Paul, in the above scripture, is not referring to the same event our Lord spoke of in John 14:3, where he promises that he “will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

It seems quite clear that the Apostle Paul is speaking of our Lord’s coming as an appearing. Paul also, in his second epistle to Timothy, uses similar language when he writes about our Lord’s first coming: “...but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:” 2 Timothy 1:9b-10

And again in this same epistle, Paul writes in chapter 4 and verse 1: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom”. Now, if the pre-tribbers are correct, then we are to understand from this verse that there will be a judgment of the living and the dead at his appearing and then seven years later there will be another judgment of the living and the dead at his coming kingdom. This understanding of this verse then poses many other problems that would have to be reconciled with other biblical passages and that would require some hermeneutical gymnastics for sure, or as Peter would say, some wresting of the scripture.

Or, we could, as Paul does in verse 8, understand that “his appearing and his kingdom” is an event that takes place at a single allotted time. Notice Paul’s words in verse 8 of chapter 4: “...the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” The language and punctuation of the passage would strongly indicate that Paul’s “that day” is a reference back to “his appearing and his kingdom” of 4:1.

Do you, dear reader, love his (our Lord’s) appearing? That is the appearing our Lord himself taught about in detail as recorded in the gospels. It is his appearing and he, of all persons, should know when, where, and how it will occur. I pray you will read our Lord’s teachings on his appearing in the gospels!

Having mentioned the Apostle Peter earlier in this study, I ask: did Peter also, as Paul did, refer to our Lord's coming as an appearing? The answer to this question reveals some very interesting information and offers great enlightenment. In I Peter 1:7 we find "That the trial of your faith...though it be tried with fire,might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" The word "appearing" in this passage is from the Greek word Apokalupsis and is Strong's # 602 which is defined as unveiling or revelation. It is most interesting that Peter uses this same Greek word in verse 13 of this same passage where it is translated "revelation". This same Greek word is also used by Paul in I Corinthians 1:7 where it is translated "coming" and in II Thessalonians 1:7 where it is translated "revealed".

So we see that the same Greek word used in reference to our Lord's return has been translated as "appearing", "revelation", "coming", and "revealed". One would be hard pressed, after studying these three passages in which word apokalupsis is used 4 times, to not come to the conclusion that all three passages are describing the same event. This is the same event that happens, as Paul said, "at that day".

Another, and most blatant, wresting of scripture by the pre-tribbers is that they claim I Thessalonians 4:13-18 teaches a rapture that occurs at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ seven years before his second coming. While in this text we find no form of the word appear, but what we do find is that in verse 15 this event is referred to as "the coming of the Lord".

So then, the obvious question for the pre-tribbers would be: if indeed I Thessalonians 4:13-18 is not referring to the second coming of the Lord, then what "coming of the Lord" is this text referring to? The question to all believers is: will we as God's people continue to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit by our unbelief or will we let go of our beloved Baptist doctrines and believe God?