

Lesson 12

WORDS AND PHRASES DESCRIBING THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Greek Words Used For the Return of Christ

1. *Erchomai*: A coming before the public, to make an appearance.
2. *Phino*: To appear, lighten, shine, show or manifest.
3. *Parousia*: An arrival and consequent presence with, a being near. It is a technical term for the arrival of the king in order to bless the people with His presence.
4. *Epiphaneia*: Brightness, appearing, manifestation as a radiant, outshining of light.
5. *Apokolopsis*: Disclosure, manifestation, revelation as in a public unfolding or unveiling.

Contextual Usage of the Words Used For the Return of Christ

1. *Erchomai*

Matt. 24:30 (Mark 13:26): Christ comes in great power and glory and His angels shall gather the elect of all ages to be with Him (Matt. 24:30,31). This is a clear reference to the second advent, which will be a mighty manifestation of Christ's power and glory.

John 14:3: Christ promised His disciples, all of whom became part of the church, that He would come again for them to be with Him.

Acts 1:11: The angels told the disciples that Christ would return in the exact same way they saw Him leave. He left once personally, bodily and visibly and He will return once personally, bodily and visibly. This seems to indicate He will return only once, not twice (Heb. 9:28).

1 Thess. 5:2: The Day of the Lord (second advent) will come like a thief in the night to the unbelieving world but not to the believing world because they will be looking for signs (1 Thess. 5:2-4).

2 Thess. 1:10: At the revelation of Christ, second advent, (2 Thess. 1:7-9), Christ will come to be glorified in His saints in that they will have a perfect salvation. This whole context is about Christians who make up the church. Salvation is complete for them at the second advent and this is their hope.

1 Cor. 4:5: Christ will judge the motives of all men especially His ministers in the church at His coming. We are to wait for this coming, for it is the time of loving judgment at the *Bema* of Christ for all believers. It is assumed that this judgment will take place at the second advent (Luke 14:14; Matt. 16:27).

2. *Phino*

Matt. 24:30: Immediately after the Great Tribulation, Christ shall appear in the sky (Matt. 24:30-31). This return shall be a great shining because Christ is absolute holiness. This appearing will not be able to be concealed. It will be noticeable to all (Rev. 1:7).

Col. 3:4: At the appearing of Christ, all true Christians will appear with Christ, for they shall be perfect and shine before all men.

1 Pet. 5:4: Faithful elders in the church shall be rewarded at the appearing of Christ. It is at this appearing that elders are rewarded, so this refers to the second advent.

3. *Parousia*

Matt. 24:3: Christ's coming is connected with the end of the age. This is a reference to the second advent.

Matt. 24:37-39: In the days of Noah, there was total indifference to God and this will be the condition of the world at the coming of Christ.

1 Cor. 15:23: Christians shall be resurrected at the coming of Christ.

1 Thess. 2:19-20: Paul's joy and reward were the Thessalonians who had believed under his ministry. This reward would be his at the coming of Christ.

1 Thess. 3:13: The Christian is to be perfect at the coming of Christ when he gets his new, resurrected body.

1 Thess. 4:15-17: At the coming of Christ, dead saints in Christ will rise first and then living saints in Christ will be caught up (raptured) to be with Christ.

1 Thess. 5:23: Christians are to be made perfect at the coming of Christ.

2 Thess. 2:1, 8: At the coming of Jesus Christ Christians will be gathered together unto Christ and at the same time Antichrist (Man of Lawlessness) shall be destroyed. This is an obvious reference to the second advent.

James 5:7-8: Because the coming of the Lord is near, Christians are to be patient, knowing Christ will solve all problems at His coming.

2 Pet. 3:4, 12: Christians are to be looking for the coming of Christ (second coming), for this event means a new heaven and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:11-14).

1 John 2:28: Christians are to abide in Christ so as not to be ashamed at the coming of Christ.

4. *Epiphaneia*

2 Thess. 2:8: Antichrist will be destroyed by the radiant brightness of Christ's coming. This is a reference to the second advent.

1 Tim. 6:14: Christians are to keep the commandment for godly living until the appearing of Christ.

2 Tim. 4:1, 8: Ministers are charged to preach the Word of God faithfully because Christ is going to appear and they shall be judged (4:2). They will be rewarded at this coming for their faithful ministries and for loving Christ's appearing (watching for His coming). Notice this appearing will take place at the time the earthly kingdom is set up and this occurs at the second advent of Christ (4:1).

Titus 2:13: Christians are told to be constantly looking for the "blessed hope and the appearing of glory (glorious appearing) of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." The "blessed hope" and "the appearing in glory" are the same event, for they are preceded by the one definite article "the" and connected by "and" in the Greek. This appearing is the radiant outshining of Christ's glory, which happens at the second advent.

5. *Apokolupsis*

2 Thess. 1:7: Christians will find complete rest from persecution when Christ is publicly revealed from heaven, who shall judge those who do not obey the gospel and who persecute Christians (2 Thess. 1:8-9). This is an obvious reference to the second advent.

1 Cor. 1:7: The Corinthians (as well as all Christians) were told "to await eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." These Christians were told to look for the public unfolding or unveiling of Christ.

1 Pet. 1:7: The testing of the Christian's faith will result in praise and glory at the revelation of Christ. The Christian finds comfort in the fact that Christ will have a public manifestation and at that time reward for faithful service by giving final salvation (perfection and rewards - 1:6-9).

1 Pet. 1:13: A Christian's hope is to be fixed upon the revelation of Jesus Christ.

New Testament Usage of the Word Day In Relation to the Return of Christ

Last Day (John 6:39-40, 44).

The "last day" in context has to do with the resurrection of all those the Father gives to the Son (6:37) and the Father draws to the Son (6:44) and who believe on Christ for salvation (6:40). It is these and these only who will be raised on the "last day" and this must be a reference to the second advent, which is the last day as concerns the Christian's final salvation when he will receive his resurrected body.

Day

Rom. 2:5: Unsaved people are storing up God's wrath for the day of wrath, which is a reference to the second advent. This day is at hand (near, close by).

Rom. 13:11-14: Because the day (of final salvation) is at hand (near), Christians are to walk godly lives, knowing that they will give an account to Christ. No time element is specified.

1 Cor. 5:12-15: The day of judgment is coming for believers when Christ will judge the Christian for his works and will reward him accordingly. No time element is specified.

2 Tim. 1:18: There was a mercy for Onesiphorus (and all Christians) who ministered to Paul. He will receive mercy (reward) from the Lord on that day. No time element is specified.

2 Tim. 4:8: There is a special reward for those who have looked constantly for Christ's return in this life. This reward will occur on that day which is the time of Christ's appearing (*epiphaneia*) and His kingdom, which will occur at the second advent.

Day of the Lord

1 Cor. 5:5: There was a professing believer who was guilty of sexual immorality and Paul committed this person to the Devil for the destruction of the flesh for the purpose that he might be saved in the day of the Lord. No time element is specified.

1 Thes. 5:2: The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night upon unbelievers and they will be judged but that day will not overtake true Christians because they will be looking for Christ's coming (1 Thess. 5:3-4). This is an obvious reference to the second advent.

2 Thess. 2:2: The Thessalonians had thought that the "Day of the Lord" had come or was to occur any moment because of the persecution they were receiving, for they thought they were in the Tribulation period. The "Day of the Lord" is the same event as the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at which time believers will be gathered unto Christ. This "Day of the Lord" could not come until the apostasy and man of lawlessness is revealed. Then Christ will come to destroy the Antichrist and the apostate religion (2 Thess. 2:8). This is an obvious reference to the second advent.

2 Peter 3:10: The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night and then there will be new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:1-13). This is a clear reference to the second advent.

Day of Christ

Phil. 1:6: God who began a good work of salvation in the Christian shall perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. This is the day of final resurrection and redemption. No time element is specified.

Phil. 1:10: Christians are to live godly lives until the day of Christ. No time element is specified.

Phil. 2:16: Christians are to stand upon the Word so that in the day of Christ His judgment will bring reward and not lack of reward. No time element is specified.

Day of the Lord Jesus Christ

2 Cor. 1:14: Christians are to take pride in one another now, as they will "in the day of our Lord Jesus." No time element is specified. This is the Day of the Lord and the Day of Jesus. There is no separation of these days.

1 Cor. 1:7-8: Christians are to eagerly await the revelation (*apokolupsis*) of Christ who will make them blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. This day occurs at the *apokolupsis*, which is a reference to the second advent. The Day of the Lord, the Day of Jesus and the Day of Christ are one day and there does not seem to be a separation in these days.

Day of God

2 Peter 3:12: The Christian is to look forward to the Day of God, which will bring new heavens and new earth. In this context, the Day of the Lord and the Day of God are the same event (2 Peter 3: 10). This is an obvious reference to the second advent. NOTE: In light of Christ's second advent, Christians are to live godly lives (2 Pet. 3:14).

Rev. 16:14-16: The Great Day of God will be when Christ comes as a thief to the unsaved world, which will be gathered to fight the Battle of Armageddon. There is a special blessing for those who stay awake and wait for Christ's return. This is an obvious reference to the second advent.

Dispensational Premillennialism (Pretribulationism) Interpretation of the Return of Christ

Positives

1. This view permits an imminent return of Christ, first for His church (pretrib rapture) and then a glorious return of Christ for Israel and the judgment of the world.
2. The hope of the church is the secret, pretribulation rapture and not the second advent of Christ.
3. There is a separation of Israel and the church so as to have two *erchomais*, two *phinos*, two *parousias*, two *epiphaneias*, and two *apokolupsis*'.
4. There is a distinction between the Day of Christ (rapture for the church) and Day of the Lord (second advent for Israel and the world). The rapture brings blessing and the second advent judgment.
5. There are two comings and three resurrections. The two comings are for the church and then for Israel. The three resurrections are for the church at the rapture, Israel and Tribulation saints at the second advent and all unsaved for judgment at the Great White Throne at the end of the Millennium.
6. This view allows for an imminent (any moment) return of Christ.
7. This view does have the church raptured out of this world before the Tribulation so the church does not go through it.
8. This position is held because of an insistence on a clear-cut separation and distinction between Israel and the church.

Negatives

1. Due to dispensationalists' insistence on a strict dichotomy (separation) of Israel and the church, they are forced to believe in two *parousias*, two *erchomais*, two *epiphaneias*, two *phinos*, and two *apokolupsis*'—one for the church (rapture before the tribulation) and one for Israel and the rest of the world after the tribulation (second advent). According to this view, none of these words are technical words and all have non-technical usages so they can refer either to the pretribulation rapture or the Second advent. The rule of thumb seems to be that if a passage deals with the second coming as a hope for believers, it is classified as the pretrib rapture. If the passage seems to involve judgment upon unbelievers and the world, it usually is classified as the second advent. The whole process is very subjective and arbitrary so as to interpret passages to defend a theological system.
2. Dispensationalists insist that the church is looking for the secret, pretrib rapture as their hope and not the second advent of Christ (Tit. 2:13). Therefore, when verses seem to indicate that Christians are looking for the second advent, they arbitrarily refer them to the pretrib rapture.
3. There is no exegetical basis to divide *erchomai*, *phino*, *parousia*, *epiphaneias*, or *apokolupsis*. This is a theological deduction, not necessarily biblical exegesis.
4. There is no exegetical basis to divide the Day of the Lord and the Day of Christ into separate events—pretrib rapture and second advent.
5. Dispensationalists must accept two returns of Christ. They may speak of one return with two phases, but their system teaches two returns, one for the church and one for Israel and the world. This seems to contradict the Bible, which teaches Christ will return only once (Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28).
6. Dispensationalists do have two comings and three resurrections. This seems to be forced upon the text because of a theological presupposition that Israel and the church must have two separate programs.
7. Many people dogmatically hold on to a pretrib rapture so they will not have to go through the tribulation. There is a real fear of persecution.

Historic Premillennial Interpretation of the Return of Christ

Positives

1. Whenever a time element is used for *phino*, *erchomai*, *parousia*, *epiphaneia* and *apokolupsis* it always refers to the second advent. When there is no time element, it is

- assumed it refers also to the second advent. There is not one verse of scripture, which dogmatically proves a pretrib rapture. A pretrib rapture must be read into the text.
2. Christians, who are members of the church, are exhorted to live godly lives in light of the fact of Christ's *erchomai* (1 Cor. 4:5), that elders will be rewarded in light of the *phino* of Christ (1 Pet. 5:4), and Christians are to be looking for the *parousia* (2 Pet. 3:12), the *epiphaneia* (Titus 2:13) and the *apokolupsis* (1 Cor. 1:8). These are all clearly defined in the New Testament as the second advent. Therefore, this does not support the idea that Christians are looking for a pretrib return of Christ. Christians are looking for the glorious second advent of Christ that will bring real rest
 3. (2 Thess. 1:7-9).
 4. The words *erchomai*, *phino*, *apokolupsis*, *epiphaneia* and *parousia* all seem to support a public appearance and manifestation of Christ and not a secret, pretrib rapture for the church.
 5. This view sees the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord as one event, each stressing different facets of the second advent.
 6. This view has one coming and two resurrections which seems to be Biblical (Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28 cf. Rev. 20:1-6).
 7. All the references to the Day of Christ or the Day of the Lord do not say "days" (plural) but "day" (singular), referring it to one future day of the Lord Jesus Christ in which he will bless the saints and judge the world.
 8. From pure exegesis, it is impossible to arrive at a pretrib rapture. This could only be supported by certain theological presuppositions: a dichotomy between Israel and the church and an imminent return of Christ.
 9. This position was the most popular eschatological scheme in the second and third centuries.

Negatives

1. This position does not teach an imminent return of Christ.
2. This position insists the church will go through the Tribulation.