

CHRISTIANS AWAIT THE ONE-TIME RETURN OF JESUS

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Ten years ago the Watchtower teaching that Jesus returned in 1914 became a problem to me. I couldn't deal with it at that time because of a lack of information. Since then I have realized that this subject leads to the question of whether or not the Scriptures allow for a long gap before Jesus returns to bring destruction on the wicked at Armageddon. According to WT theology this is Jesus' future *apokalipsis* (revealing). As of the year 2006 there is a 92-year gap since 1914. This subject also relates to the popular teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture with its 7-year gap.

The answer to this question is largely found in understanding the contexts in which the Greek words for Jesus' return were used in the Scriptures. So this discussion comes down to the question of whether Jesus' return encompasses two events or a single event. In other words can one say that his **parousia** is at one time and his **apokalipsis** is at a later time or do they both occur at the same time?

A great amount of material is available on this subject, but perhaps the most comprehensive is Alexander Reese's book *The Approaching Advent of Christ*. In addition to parousia and apokalipsis, two more Greek words are involved that are **associated with the apokalipsis**. These are **epiphania** and **erchomai**.

GREEK WORD MEANINGS:

parousia (noun) = **a coming to be present**. *It does not mean an invisible presence. Technically the noun was used for the arrival of a king, emperor or ruler. The corresponding Latin term is adventus. TDNT.*

Hence it was translated as adventus in the old Latin bibles.

apokalipsis (noun) = **a revealing**

epiphania (noun) = **an appearing**, a manifestation [**phaneroo** (verb) = to be manifested]

erchomai (verb) = **to come** [**elthon** = having come]

THESE FOUR TERMS DESCRIBE THE SAME EVENT ON THE DAY JESUS RETURNS

2 Thess 2:8 "by the appearing (**epiphania**) of his coming (**parousia**)..."

1 John 2:28 "when he is made visible (**phanerothe**)...at his coming (**parousia**)."

Matt 24:39 "the flood...so the advent (**parousia**) of the Son of Man will be"

Luke 17:27, 30 "the flood...on **that day** when the Son of Man is revealed (**apokaliptetai**)."

Jesus uses the flood as a single event illustration of his return

2 Thess 1:7-10 "to repay with affliction those who afflict you, to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed (**apokalipsei**) from heaven with His mighty angels...*when He comes* (**elthe = erchomai**) to be glorified in His saints **ON that day**"

OLIVET DISCOURSE

Matt 24:27: "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will the coming (**parousia**) of the Son of Man be."

Matt 24:39 "the flood...so the advent (**parousia**) of the Son of Man will be"

Matt 24:42 "you do not know on **what day** you lord is coming (**erchetai**)."

Rev 1:7 "He is coming (**erchetai**) with the clouds and **every eye will see Him**.
Please refer back to 1 John 2:28 "when he is made visible (**phanerothe**)

So the Parousia cannot be invisible or secret because it is the same event as the epiphania which is visible, and the apokalypsis which means a revealing. Additionally Christ's parousia will be seen just as lightning is seen.

Heb 9:28 "Christ...will appear (*opsthesetai*) a **second time** for salvation, to those who eagerly await him."

Jesus' first appearance was in the 1st century. This verse clearly shows that there is only a 'second time which is for salvation' not a 1914 return and then a later Armageddon return.

NO CHRISTIANS WILL BE IN HEAVEN AT THE TIME OF JESUS' RETURN.

WT teaching on this is that the first resurrection occurred in 1918 exactly 3 1/2 years after the setting up of the kingdom in October 1914. This resurrection was another invisible event. To get around the problem of the following scripture statements the WT uses the idea of two classes of Christians. Yet this is shown to be wrong by Eph 4:4 "one body, one hope, one baptism..."

Also Mark 3:35 "Whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother..." and many other scriptures. However, the following scriptures demonstrate that this 1918 resurrection event is not possible because all living Christians must demonstrate their faith right through the Great Tribulation which occurs immediately before Jesus' apokalypsis and epiphania.

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL THE PAROUSIA

1 Thess 5:23 "may your spirit, soul and body be **preserved at** the **parousia** of our Lord Jesus."

James 5:7 "be **patient**, brothers, **until** the **parousia** of our Lord."

This aspect is not a problem to WT theology.

STILL ON EARTH AT THE APOKALYPSIS

1Pet 1:7 "so that the **proof of your faith**,...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor **AT** the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of Jesus Christ."

1Pet 1:13 "Prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope** completely on the grace to be brought to you **AT** the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of Jesus...."

2 Thess 1:7-10 "to repay with affliction those who afflict you, to give **relief** to you who are afflicted and to us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed (**apokalipsei**) from heaven with His mighty angels...when he comes (*elthe*) to be glorified in His saints **ON that Day**"

1Cor 1:7,8 "**awaiting eagerly** the revelation (**apokalipsin**) of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will confirm you to the end (*of the age*) **blameless IN** the Day of our Lord Jesus..."
The end (telos) of the age, not the end of one's life. Bauer's Gk/Eng Lexicon.

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL THE EPIPHANIA

1Tim 6:14 "that you **keep the commandment**...**until** the **epiphania** of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Why would they be awaiting the revelation of Jesus if he had already revealed himself to them in an earlier invisible parousia and taken them to heaven?

*It is therefore necessary for all living Christians to 'prove their faith', 'set their hope', 'be made firm as blameless', 'be keeping the commandment', and waiting to receive " the undeserved kindness to be brought to you AT the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of Jesus.." So no Christian can be separately alive in heaven at Armageddon, that is at "the **epiphania** of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

MUST BE ON EARTH DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Matt 24:15ff "Therefore when you see **the Abomination of Desolation**...standing in the holy place...those in Judea are to flee to the mountains"

Matt 24:21 "For then there will be **Great Tribulation**...."

Matt 24:23 **During the Tribulation**. "Then if anyone says **to you** , Look here is the Christ, or, There! do not believe it. For false Christ's..."

Why give the warning if anointed Christians are already safely in heaven?

Matt 24:29 "**Immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds."

Only after this does Jesus send his angels to gather his chosen ones. vs31

Rev 13:7 "It was given to him [*the beast*] to make **war with the saints** and to overcome them."

Therefore the 'holy ones' are shown to have endured the 42 month (vs. 6) Great Tribulation.

So they cannot be in heaven during the Great Tribulation.

CELESTIAL DARKENING IS AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION BUT BEFORE THE DAY OF CHRIST

THE ORDER OF EVENTS

Joel 2:31 "The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood **BEFORE** the great and awesome **day of the Lord** comes."

So when one refers back to Matt 24:29 the order of events becomes clear :

- 1. The Great Tribulation*
- 2. Sun, moon and stars are darkened*
- 3. The day of Jehovah when Jesus returns at Armageddon. This is also "the day of Christ."*

Most scholars recognize "day of the Lord" to mean the same as "the day of Christ."

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST

Phil 1:6 "He who began a good work in you will perfect it **until the day of Christ Jesus.**"

Phil 1:10 "in order to be sincere and blameless **until the day of Christ.**"

2Tim 1:12 "He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him **until that day.**

2Tim 4:8 "The crown of righteousness, which the Lord...will award me **on that day.**"

1Cor 3:13 "each man's work will become evident; for **the day** will show it up because it is to be revealed with fire."

SALVATION FOR ALL CHRISTIANS OCCURS AT THE SAME TIME THAT DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED BEGINS

Luke 17:26-30 "Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man they were eating:...until **the day Noah entered** into the ark, and the flood came and **destroyed them** all....but **on the day Lot went out** from Sodom it rained fire...and **destroyed them** all... It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed."

*This emphasizes that the righteous will be delivered in **the same very short period of time** as the wicked are being destroyed. Noah's entry into the ark and Lot's going out of Sodom are types of the salvation of all Christians, i.e. to a place of safety. There is no room here for an earlier salvation in 1918 or any split in the times of salvation.*

DRAGNET PARABLE

Matt 13:49, 50 "That is how it will be in the conclusion of the age (KIT) : the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the fiery furnace."

These details make the timing of the SALVATION (including the resurrection) close to the time of the pouring out of God's wrath, thereby making any form of a pre-tribulation resurrection impossible.

Evidently the Scriptures show that salvation is in the form of resurrection and rapture as occurring after the great tribulation and, in fact, not until 'The Day of Christ', 'The Day of Yahweh' which is, naturally, a Post-Tribulation Rapture position.

So clearly Christ's return will be a single future event. This means that, concerning this subject, 1914 and 1918 are irrelevant dates in the biblical scheme of things.