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THE COMING OF THE LORD AS AN EXTENDED UNIFIED COMPLEX OF  
EVENTS: A PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE TWO 'SECOND COMINGS'  
OBJECTION TO PRETRIBULATIONISM

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiii
ANCIENT SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS .....	xvi
ABSTRACT .....	xviii
DEDICATION	
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose and Thesis Statement	2
Methodology	2
Assumptions and Limitations	3
Terminology	4
The Two-Comings Objection to Pretribulationism	5
The Historical Objection	
The Lexical Objection	
The Exegetical Objection	
The Hermeneutical Objection	
The Theological Objection	
The Practical Objection	
Conclusion	
Pretribulation Models for the Nature of the Coming of the Lord	15
Model 1: Two Distinct Comings Separate From the Wrath of God	
Model 2: One Coming with Two Phases (or Stages) Separate From the Wrath of God	

Model 3: One Coming as an Extended Complex of Events Causing the Wrath of God	
Common Problems of the Pretribulation Models	27
Misunderstanding the Two-Comings Objection	
Ambiguous Use of Theological Terminology	
Insufficient Integration of Lexical Scholarship	
Ambiguous Use of NT Greek Words	
Incompleteness of the Models	
Conclusion	38
CHAPTER 2: THE COMING OF THE LORD (YAHWEH) THEME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM .....	40
Part 1–The Coming of the LORD: Immanent Divine Action	43
Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Coming of the LORD	43
The Presence-Coming of the LORD and His Direct Historical Intervention	
The Coming of the Time of the LORD’s Coming: The “Time,” “Days,” “Day,” and the “End”	
The Coming of the Word of the LORD and Its Coming to Pass	
The Coming of the Representative of the LORD	
The Place from Which the LORD Comes: The Invisible Heaven	
The Visible Versus the Invisible Presence of the LORD	
Theophany: The Coming Glory-Presence of the LORD	63
A Brief Biblical Theology of Theophany	
Theophany, Presence, Glory, and Holiness	
Identifying a Theophany: Theophanic Markers	
Summary and Conclusion	71

Part 2—The Revelation of the LORD: The Result of His Coming	72
Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Revelation of the LORD	73
To Know, Knowledge	
Unveiling, Uncovering, Revealing	
The Fear of the LORD	
The Process of Revelation in History	80
The “Coming” of the Word of the LORD	
The Occurrence of Historical Events in Accord with the Word of the LORD	
Conformity of the Prophet’s Word with the God of Israel	
Verification of Revelation: The “Recognition Formula”	86
The Recognition Formula in Covenant	
The Recognition Formula in Judgment	
The Recognition Formula in Wrath, Indignation, and Anger	
The Recognition Formula in the Presence, Power, and Sovereignty of the LORD	
Summary and Conclusion	92
Part 3—The Sovereignty of the LORD: The Purpose of the Coming	92
The Coming of the LORD in Judgment Reveals His Sovereignty	96
Retribution at the Coming of the LORD	
The Coming of the LORD in Wrath Reveals His Sovereignty	99
Revelation due to the Wrath of the LORD	
Revelation Due to Retribution	
Summary and Conclusion	103
Part 4—The Day of the LORD: The Time of His Coming	103

Lexical Analysis: The Meaning of “Day” (יֹמַי <i>yôm</i> ) and “Time” (עֵת <i>ēṭ</i> )	106
The Day of the LORD as the Time of Theophany	114
Theophanic Markers on the Day of the LORD	
The Sealed Vision of the End (The Scroll): The Extended Complex of Events	116
Summary and Conclusion	122
Part 5–The Coming of the LORD in Second Temple Literature	122
Second Temple Literature and Background	124
Sovereignty Requires Historical Demonstration	125
The Coming of the LORD is the Action of the LORD in History	127
The Revelation of the LORD	129
The Day of the LORD, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of Judgment	130
The Messianic Woes, or the Birth Pangs of the Messiah	
The Day of the LORD, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of Judgment	
Part 6–Conclusion	133
CHAPTER 3: THE COMING OF THE LORD (JESUS CHRIST) THEME IN THE NEW TESTAMENT .....	137
Part 1–The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: Immanent Divine Action	138
Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Coming of the Lord	138
The OT “Language of Presence-Coming” in the NT	
Etymology and Definition of Παρουσία	
Religious Technical Use: The Divine Parousia	
Secular Technical Use: The Hellenistic Imperial Parousia	
Second Temple Use of Παρουσία	
Non-Technical Use of Παρουσία in the NT: Extended Period of Active Presence	

Technical Use of Παρουσία in the NT: The Extended Royal Glory-Presence of the Lord	
Theophany of the Son: The Παρουσία of the Lord Jesus Christ	170
The Παρουσία is a Sinaitic Theophany: 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18	
Equivalent NT Terms and Phrases for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ	
The Appearings of the Lord Jesus Christ	180
The Appearance of His Presence (The Posttribulational Appearing)	
Summary and Conclusion	186
Part 2—The Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Result of His Coming	186
Lexical Analysis: The Revelation of the Lord	187
Ἀποκαλύπτω “to Reveal;” Ἀποκάλυψις “Revelation”	
Φανερώω “To Manifest, To Reveal, Make Known,” “Show”	
The Process of Revelation in the NT	191
The Coming of the Word of the Lord	
The Ἀποκάλυψις of the Lord: An Extended Complex of Events	
Summary and Conclusion	196
Part 3—The Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Purpose of His Coming	196
The Coming of the Son of Man with the Clouds of Heaven	197
Summary and Conclusion	204
Part 4—The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Time of His Coming	205
The Παρουσία, the Day of the Lord, and the Tribulation	206
The Presence-Coming (Παρουσία) of the Lord and His Historical Intervention	
Summary and Conclusion	209

Part 5–Potential Objection: Events Preceding the Day of the Lord and His Coming	210
The Apostasy and the Παρουσία of the Lawless One (2 Thessalonians 2:2–12)	210
The Problem of Explaining the Thessalonians’ Anxiety (v. 2)	
The Day of the Lord “is Present” (v. 2)	
The Day of the Lord “Will Not Be Present Unless” (v. 3)	
Cosmic Upheavals (Joel 2:28–32, Acts 2:17–21, and Matthew 24:29–31)	218
The Coming of Elijah Before the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5)	221
Part 6–Conclusion	222
CHAPTER 4: THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE BASED ON THE PROPOSED MODEL OF THE COMING OF THE LORD .....	225
Part 1–The Coming of the Lord: One Theme Within a Complex Motif	226
The Unifying Concept of Scripture	227
The Sovereignty of the Lord	
The Revelation of the Lord	
The Coming of the Lord	
The Time When the Lord Comes to Reveal His Sovereignty	242
The Day of the Lord	
Summary of Key Points of the Proposed Model	243
Part 2–Evaluation of the Thesis: Does an Extended Unified Complex of Events View of the Coming of the Lord Provide a Reasonable Solution to the “Two Comings” Objection to Pretribulationism?	245
Response to the Lexical Objection	246
Response 1: The Supposed Double Reference of Key Greek Terms	
Response 2: Key Terms Do Not Appear Unqualified in Any Posttribulation Text	

Conclusion	
Response to the Exegetical Objection	254
Response 1: The Major Rapture Texts	
Response 2: The Olivet Discourse and the Major Rapture Texts	
Response 3: 2 Thessalonians 2	
Response 4: The Book of Revelation	
Conclusion	
Response to the Hermeneutical Objection	273
Response 1: A “Natural” Interpretation of Coming of the Lord Texts Creates Logical, Biblical, and Theological Problems, Many of Which Currently Have No Resolution	
Response 2: Scripture is Admittedly Complex Even in Its Unifying Theme(s)	
Response 3: Precedent Exists for Viewing an Extended Complex of Events as a Unity	
Response 4: The Proposed Model Conforms to Well-Established Hermeneutics	
Conclusion	
Response to the Theological Objection	283
Response 1: The Signs-Imminence Paradox	
Response 2: The Church is Promised Both Tribulation and Removal From It	
Response 3: Improper Mixing of the Saints Between Israel and the Church	
Conclusion	
Response to the Practical Objection	292
Response 1: In an Extended Unified Coming Exhortations Focus on the Beginning	
Response 2: Paul’s Response to the Thessalonians’ Anxiety is Reasonable	

Response 3: A Pretribulational Rescue Does Not Render the Word of God  
Meaningless

Conclusion

Part 3–Conclusion	300
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	304

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC ABBREVIATIONS

*Alphabetized by Abbreviation*

The 1984 debate, or (1984) in footnotes	Reiter, Richard R., Gleason L. Archer, Paul D. Feinberg, and Douglas J. Moo. <i>Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-; Mid-; or Post-Tribulation?</i>
The 2010 debate, or (2010) in footnotes	Craig A. Blaising, Alan Hultberg, and Douglas J. Moo. <i>Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation.</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ANE	Ancient Near East
APOT	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.</i> Edited by R. H. Charles.
ASV	American Standard Version of the Bible
BAG	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 2d ed.
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. G. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 3d ed.
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.</i> Oxford, 1907
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
CTR	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
Darby	Darby Translation
DBPET	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times.</i> Edited by J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, C. Marvin Pate.
EDB	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible.</i> Edited by David N. Freedman.
EDT	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology.</i> Edited by Walter A. Elwell. 2d ed.
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,</i> G. A. Buttrick (ed.)
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IVPNTC	The IVP New Testament Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCTCRS	Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies (Series)

<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JTSA</i>	<i>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</i>
<i>LASBF</i>	<i>Liber annuus Studii biblici franciscani</i>
LCC	Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia, 1953–
L&N	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. 2d ed.
<i>MSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NKJV	New King James Version
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by K. Sakenfeld.
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols.
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by Moisés Silva. 2d ed.
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by W. A. VanGemeren.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SBLM	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich.
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren.
<i>TLNT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> . C. Spicq.
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich.
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , Edited by R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke.

<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<b>WBC</b>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZST</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## ANCIENT SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

### Apocrypha and Septuagint (LXX)

Bar	Baruch
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah
Bel	Bel and the Dragon
Sg Three	Song of the Three Young Men
Sus	Susanna
1–2 Esd	1–2 esdras
Add Esth	Additions to Esther
Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah
Jdt	Judith
1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees
3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees
Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Ps 151	Psalm 151
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

### Pseudepigrapha and Early Patristic Books

<i>Apoc.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of</i>
<i>Apoc. Ab.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
<i>Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Mart. Ascen. Isa. 6–11</i>
<i>As. Mos.</i>	<i>Assumption (or Testament) of Moses</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)</i>
<i>3 Bar.</i>	<i>3 Baruch (Greek Apocalypse)</i>
<i>4 Bar.</i>	<i>4 Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>3 En.</i>	<i>3 Enoch (Hebrew Apocalypse)</i>
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>L.A.E</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
<i>Sib.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>T. 12 Patr.</i>	<i>Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs</i>
<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>Wis.</i>	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>

### Ancient Hellenistic Literature

Aesch.	Aeschylus (B.C.E.)
Hdt.	Herodotus, <i>The Histories</i> (440 B.C.E.)

Iambl.	Iamblichus, of Chalcis in Syria, at the time of Constantine the Great, founder of the Syrian school of Neo-Platonism, and reputed author of a work on the Egyptian mysteries, ed. H. Pistelli, 1894; <i>De Mysteriis</i> , ed. G. Parthey, 1857
Menand.	Menander, of Athens (343–290 B.C.E.)
Myst.	<i>De Mysteriis</i>

#### Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

Q	Qumran
Mas	Masada
1QM	<i>Milhamah</i> or <i>War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>Serek Hayahad</i> or <i>Rule of the Community</i>
1QIsa <sup>a</sup>	Isaiah <sup>a</sup>
1QIsa <sup>b</sup>	Isaiah <sup>b</sup>
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document

#### Josephus

<i>Vita</i>	<i>Vita</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>The Life</i>
<i>C. Ap.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem</i>
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>B.J.</i>	<i>Bellum judaicum</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>

#### Talmudic Texts

<i>b.</i>	Tractates in the Babylonian Talmud
<i>y.</i>	Tractates in the Jerusalem Talmud
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
<i>Hag.</i>	<i>Hagigah</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>

#### Targumic Texts

<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>
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#### Apostolic Fathers

<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabas</i>
<i>1–2 Clem.</i>	<i>1–2 Clement</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogues with Trypho</i>
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Diognetus</i>
<i>Herm. Mand.</i>	Shepherd of Hermas, <i>Mandate</i>
<i>Herm. Sim.</i>	Shepherd of Hermas, <i>Similitude</i>

## ABSTRACT

Title: The Coming of the Lord as an Extended Unified Complex of Events: A Proposed Response to the Two ‘Second Comings’ Objection to Pretribulationism

Chapter one discusses the specifics of the two second-comings (or two-comings) objection to pretribulationism and an analysis of current responses to it. The two-comings objection essentially criticizes the pretribulation rapture because it divides the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into two second comings; the rapture and the posttribulational glorious return. Upon further analysis, the two-comings objection can be divided into six elements: historical, lexical, exegetical, hermeneutical, theological, and practical elements.

In chapter one the three current pretribulational models of the coming of the Lord, which have been formulated to answer the two-comings objection, are also identified. Pretribulationists presenting the first model differentiate the rapture and the posttribulational return as two separate and distinct physical “comings” of the Lord. The second model is a slightly nuanced version of the first. Pretribulationists presenting the second model state that the rapture and the posttribulational return are *distinct stages* or *phases* of the *one* second coming. The third model is different entirely from the first two. Pretribulationists presenting the third model argue that the coming of the Lord, or the *parousía*, refers to an extended period of time that begins before the Tribulation and incorporates a complex of events. At a minimum, this complex of events includes the rapture, the Tribulation (or Daniel’s seventieth week), the wrath of God, the day of the Lord, and the glorious visible return. It is one coming because the Lord is present, though invisible, throughout the Tribulation. Only at the end of the Tribulation will the Lord’s

previously invisible presence become visible as He descends bodily all the way to the earth and thereby fulfills Acts 1:11.

The last section of chapter one identifies Model 3 as the closest of the current models to the proposed model of the current thesis. A more detailed analysis of its current arguments is provided, which identifies where it still falls short in fully answering the two-comings objection. This analysis will be used as a guide for study in the remainder of the dissertation. The remaining chapters will work to fully address these deficiencies and expand Model 3 in an attempt to answer each element of the two-comings objection.

Because the proposed model is a paradigm shift from those in the current debate, it is believed that merely defending proof texts will be insufficient for reasonably responding to the two-comings objection. For this reason chapters two and three lay a lexical and exegetical foundation for suggesting a complex unifying concept of scripture that will be fully developed and explained in chapter four. This complex unifying concept will act as an interpretive framework by which to understand the proposed model of the coming of the Lord. It is suggested that the coming of the Lord is one theme within a complex motif that also includes the themes of the revelation of the Lord, the sovereignty of the Lord, and the day of the Lord. Briefly stated, this concept interrelates these themes as follows: The coming of the Lord is His immanent action on the day of the Lord that results in the revelation of His sovereignty.

Chapter two provides a study of the coming of the LORD (Yahweh) theme in the Old Testament (OT) and Second Temple Judaism (ST) and its relation to the other three biblical themes of the complex unifying concept. Each chapter section provides a lexical and exegetical examination of these biblical themes to show how they reasonably

interrelate as well as provide support for the proposed model. The last section of chapter two provides a high level overview of ST literature. Specifically, it gives evidence that these four biblical themes remained essentially the same in ST as that presented based on OT data.

Chapter three provides a similar examination from New Testament (NT) data as that conducted in chapter two but with each theme examined with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ. The same four biblical themes of the coming, revelation, sovereignty, and day of the Lord are examined and presented to be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter three concludes with a discussion of the most significant potential objections to the proposed model, which consist of texts that seemingly indicate that certain identifiable events or signs must occur before the coming of the Lord.

Chapter four provides the theological support for the proposed model. The first part suggests a complex unifying concept of scripture based on current biblical scholarship as well as the evidence presented in chapters two and three. It is suggested that this complex unifying concept provides theological support for the proposed model by showing that it is theologically coherent. Next, a concise summary of the proposed model is presented based on its development from chapters two, three, and chapter four part one. Finally, a response is provided for each of the elements of the two-comings objection based on the proposed model, with one exception. Due to space constraints, the historical element of the two-comings objection is not responded to in this dissertation. All responses are examined for their ability to reasonably answer each element. The dissertation concludes that the proposed model, with the exception of the historical element, reasonably responds to the two-comings objection.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Fran, the love of my life.



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Pretribulationism teaches that believers of the current age are “raptured” from earth by the Lord Jesus Christ *before* the future (or final) Tribulation period.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine is one of five premillennial views on the temporal relationship of the rapture to the Tribulation.<sup>2</sup> While the rapture itself is unmistakably taught in 1 Thess 4:14–17, its exact relationship to the Tribulation is nowhere explicitly stated.<sup>3</sup>

From the earliest years of the formation of this doctrine among premillennialists it has fallen under the criticism that a pretribulation rapture requires two “second comings”<sup>4</sup> of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> While many other biblical and theological arguments have been raised against pretribulationism, the two-comings objection has been the most substantial and long-standing.<sup>6</sup> More recently, it appears in both the 1984 and 2010 published debates

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<sup>1</sup> Those in the debate addressed in this dissertation (see Assumptions and Limitations below) are unanimous in the view that Scripture teaches that there will be unprecedented period of suffering for believers and outpouring of the wrath of God upon the world in the years immediately preceding the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth.

<sup>2</sup> The five views are: 1) Pretribulation; 2) Mid-Tribulation; 3) Prewrath; 4) Partial; and 5) Posttribulation; cf. “Rapture,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times* (eds. Hays, J. Daniel, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 362–64.

<sup>3</sup> This point is conceded by all premillennial views. Cf. Alan Hultberg, “Conclusion,” in *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (ed. S. N. Gundry; 2d ed.; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 275. 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 and John 14:2–3 are also commonly accepted as referring to the rapture. Hultberg, “Introduction,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 11.

<sup>4</sup> This criticism will herein be referred to as the “two-comings objection.”

<sup>5</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956; repr., 1983), 35–60, in his chapter on “The Rise and Spread of Pretribulationism,” notes that the two-comings objection has been a foundational criticism of pretribulationism since the time of Darby. See also J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 36–40.

<sup>6</sup> This objection appears as a principal argument in virtually every work critical of pretribulationism. The most notable include: Robert H. Gundry, *First the Antichrist: A Book for Lay*

among premillennial scholars on the rapture.<sup>7</sup> For these reasons, providing a reasonable response to this objection will significantly increase the validity of the pretribulation rapture view.

### **Purpose & Thesis Statement**

The purpose of this dissertation will be to propose a model of the coming of the Lord that can reasonably respond to the two-comings objection, which is exegetically supported, theologically reasonable, and maintains a unified coming of the Lord. It is the thesis of this dissertation that viewing the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as an extended unified complex of events provides a reasonable response to the criticism that a pretribulation rapture requires two “second comings” of the Lord.

### **Methodology**

This dissertation will begin by providing a brief overview of the six elements of the two-comings objection. These elements will serve as criteria against which the thesis will be evaluated. Next, the three primary pretribulation models of the nature of the coming of the Lord will be discussed and analyzed to determine their respective innate ability to

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*Christians Approaching the Third Millennium and Inquiring Whether Jesus Will Come to Take the Church Out of the World Before the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 74–76; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 164–66; Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation: A Biblical Examination of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 156–62; William E. Bell, Jr. “A Critical Evaluation of the Pretribulation Rapture Doctrine in Christian Eschatology” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1967), 4; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 157, cf. 33–40; Norman F. Douty, *The Great Tribulation Debate: Has Christ’s Return Two Stages?* (Harrison: Gibbs, 1956); Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 35–60; Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1937; repr., Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1975), 19–33; Henry W. Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and the Revelation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), 145–46, objects saying that while scripture may reference a “second” coming (Heb 9:28) it does not speak of a “third coming.” Cf. Hultberg, “Introduction,” 14.

<sup>7</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard R. Reiter, *Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-; Mid-; or Post-Tribulation?* (ed. Stanley N. Gundry; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984; repr., 1996); Craig A. Blaising, Alan Hultberg, and Douglas J. Moo, *Three Views on the*

answer the two-comings objection. This study will attempt to show that the best of these existing models is the one which views the coming of the Lord as an extended complex of events. Chapter one will conclude by identifying the fundamental problems and deficiencies common to these models to ensure that development of the proposed model avoids those same issues.

Chapters two and three will provide a study of lexical and exegetical evidence for an extended unified complex of events view of the coming of the Lord. Chapter two will cover the Old Testament (OT) and Second Temple Literature (ST). Chapter three will cover New Testament (NT) evidence. Chapter four will present the theological evidence for an extended unified complex of events view of the coming of the Lord. This presentation will also include an evaluation of the proposed model's ability to reasonably respond to each element of the two-comings objection identified in the introduction except for the historical element. Due to space constraints it will not be possible to respond to the historical element of the two-comings objection; however, it will be defined in this chapter. Where applicable, critiques of the proposed model will be examined in order to determine if they represent a significant weakness of the view.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

There will be several elements of eschatology assumed in this dissertation. First, a conservative evangelical perspective will be assumed, though research will not be so limited. Biblical and theological scholarship from a wide range of perspectives will be examined as it relates to this topic. Second, a futurist view of eschatology will be

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*Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (ed. Stanley N. Gundry; 2d ed.; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

assumed, as opposed to a preterist, historicist, or idealist view.<sup>8</sup> To be specific, a futurist position understands the prophecies concerning the antichrist, the Tribulation (as described in n. 1 above), the rapture, the second coming of Christ, and the millennial kingdom to occur literally sometime in the future. Third, premillennialism will be assumed, though support for elements of the proposed thesis will be found among other millennial views. Fourth, since the goal of this dissertation is to argue that the two-comings objection does not invalidate the pretribulation rapture position, that position will be assumed for the sake of the argument. Since both the Midtribulation and Prewrath views separate the rapture from the visible posttribulational advent of Christ, the two-comings objection applies to each; therefore these views will be considered variants to the pretribulation view.<sup>9</sup> It is not the intention to answer every possible objection to the proposed model; therefore, only significant exegetical and theological critiques of the proposed view will be presented and answered in order to demonstrate that they are ultimately not fatal to the view. Presentation of these critiques will be limited to those that are directly related to the two-comings objection.

### **Terminology**

Through the course of this study it will become apparent that key terms have different designations between various writers, and can even vary within a given work. For the purposes of this dissertation, “the return” will be used to specifically refer to the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Millard Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 97–98; see also Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 29–39, for a rich survey of the various approaches to the book of Revelation as well as a persuasive defense of a futurist interpretive approach to the book.

<sup>9</sup> In the 1984 Debate, *Three Views* (1984), 213–18, 223–31, both Gleason Archer (Mid-Seventieth-Week) and Paul Feinberg (Pretribulation) criticize Douglas Moo for his rejection of a “two-phase” Parousia. Cf. Hultberg, “Introduction,” 14, 19; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 12.

posttribulational physical return of Christ *to earth* unless otherwise qualified. In citations “the return” could reference the rapture, the posttribulational return to earth, or the complex of events surrounding that posttribulational return. The reference that is intended will be apparent from context or clarified explicitly when necessary. The term “the Second Coming” will be avoided unless speaking about its use by a particular writer. Where the phrase, “the coming of the Lord” is used, it will refer specifically to the NT doctrine portraying the Lord’s future coming to rapture the church, judge believers and unbelievers, and return to earth to set up his earthly kingdom. Whether the coming of the Lord can reasonably be held to consist of a rapture and return separated by a number of years will be examined in the following chapters; however, all those in the current debate agree that these events occur at the coming of the Lord.<sup>10</sup> Definitions for other terms will be noted as necessary.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Two-Comings Objection to Pretribulationism**

The two comings objection can be summarized as follows: The NT uniformly presents, and the church has historically affirmed that the coming of the Lord is a single, future, glorious, posttribulational event. Because pretribulationism separates in time the rapture, “the coming of the Lord *for* his saints,” from the glorious posttribulational descent of the Lord Jesus Christ, “the coming of the Lord *with* his saints,” it directly contradicts scripture and the historic belief of the church; therefore, it must be rejected. Moving beyond this basic description, a study of the objection will reveal that it is actually a

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<sup>10</sup> Hultberg, “Introduction,” 14; cf. Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 11, 13; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise specified, theological terms will follow generally accepted definitions: cf. J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, C. Marvin Pate, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*; Mal Couch, ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology: A Practical Guide to the People, Viewpoints, and History of Prophetic Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996); Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*.

composite of arguments, all of which argue that the future coming of the Lord cannot be split into two distinct comings or two phases of one coming.<sup>12</sup> This survey will only address those arguments that directly cite “two comings” or “two phases” of the coming of the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

### ***The Historical Objection***

The first element of the two-comings objection is the objection from church history. Critics object that the church has historically viewed the second coming as a single event at the end of the Tribulation and the pretribulation rapture is an aberration from this historically held belief.<sup>14</sup> Payne comments that pretribulationism, in its effort to maintain the imminency of the Lord’s coming, lost the classical viewpoint’s “appreciation of Christ’s coming as one unified event.”<sup>15</sup> Ladd supplies numerous biographical accounts where premillennialists who originally accepted a pretribulation rapture subsequently rejected it upon a more discriminating view.<sup>16</sup> He writes that this was due to the fact that “Pretribulationism was accepted ‘uncritically’ along with a sound premillennialism.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, critics object that the pretribulation doctrine is a significant deviation from the historic belief of the church.

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<sup>12</sup> E.g., Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 164, states that the pretribulation view teaches a “twofold coming of Christ.” After his review of the doctrine he states, “There is, however, no sound Scriptural basis for the position that the Second Coming of Christ must be divided into *these two phases*” (emphasis added); cf. Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 177; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 162.

<sup>13</sup> Because the fundamental premise of the pretribulation system is that the rapture is a distinct event from the posttribulation return, a survey of the two-comings objection could quickly fall into a survey of all major objections to pretribulationism.

<sup>14</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 172–88; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 157; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 19–60; Bell, “A Critical Evaluation of the Pretribulation Rapture,” 4; Douty, *The Great Tribulation Debate*, 117–27.

<sup>15</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 157.

<sup>16</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 40–60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

### *The Lexical Objection*

The second element is the argument that the meaning and usage of the NT words for the Lord's coming provide no support for two comings, and in fact argue for a single event.<sup>18</sup> Principally, these words include, "coming" (παρουσία, *parousía*), "revelation" (ἀποκάλυψις, *apokálypsis*), and "appearance" (ἐπιφάνεια, *epipháneia*). Alexander Reese adds the terms "the End" and "the Day" to this list of NT terms.<sup>19</sup> Briefly stated, critics argue that all these terms unmistakably reference a single event, the appearing and revelation of Christ at His glorious posttribulational coming on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ladd writes, "The vocabulary used of our Lord's return lends no support for the idea of two comings or of two aspects of His coming. On the contrary, it substantiates the view that the return of Christ will be a single, indivisible glorious event."<sup>20</sup> After a survey of their usages in the NT, Hoekema writes, "No argument for the two-stage coming can be derived from the use of the New Testament words for the Second Coming."<sup>21</sup> Payne argues,

[I]f *parousia* is used indiscriminately by the New Testament writers for either of the proposed phases of Christ's coming, one cannot but wonder whether the apostolic writers really intended to distinguish them in the first place. The burden of proof rests upon those who would demonstrate the two phases, for a single Greek name seems to require a single event,

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<sup>18</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 194–96; Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," (1984), 176–78; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 165–67; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 44–8; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 158–62; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 61–70.

<sup>19</sup> Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, 167–83. Before George Ladd's book, *The Blessed Hope*, Reese was viewed as the monumental work criticizing the pretribulation rapture view. Even after Ladd, Reese's work remains a significant voice to contend with as it is repeatedly cited by both pretribulationists and posttribulationists today. See Hultberg, "Introduction," 17 n. 15; Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 195 n. 5, 198 n. 12, 199 n. 17; Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From the Hour: Biblical Evidence for the Pretribulational Return of Christ* (4th ed.; Miami Springs, Fla.: Schoettle Publishing, 1991), 227–50; John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation: A Historical and Biblical Study of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 31–9.

<sup>20</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 70.

<sup>21</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 165.

unless strong proof is offered to the contrary. The use of *parousia* for two events seven years apart would suggest two separate comings.<sup>22</sup>

It is also common to cite the technical use of the term “to meet” (ἀπάντησις, *apantēsis*) in 1 Thess 4:17 as a reason for the impossibility of two comings.<sup>23</sup> Critics argue that the technical meaning, especially when used with *parousía*, refers to the going out of delegates from a city to meet a ruler or dignitary upon his *parousía* to accompany him back to the city.<sup>24</sup> Payne writes, “The very thought of ‘meeting’ assumes that the party met continues to advance without pause to his destination, which means in this case, Christ’s continuing uninterruptedly to earth.”<sup>25</sup> The lexical objection simply stated is that the NT words for the coming of the Lord cannot be used to support a two-phased coming.

### ***The Exegetical Objection***

The third element is exegetical. Critics argue that while the NT clearly teaches the bodily, visible, glorious second coming of Christ, it does not similarly indicate that the rapture is a distinct coming.<sup>26</sup> In practice this element is threefold. First, critics examine the three major rapture texts (John 14:3; 1 Cor 15:51–52; 1 Thess 4:13–18) to demonstrate that there is no indication of a two-fold coming.<sup>27</sup> Moo concludes, “Any indication that this coming is to be a two-stage event, in which the rapture is separated from the final manifestation, would have to come from passages describing that event. *We can now*

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<sup>22</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 200–01; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 168; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 91–2.

<sup>24</sup> E. Peterson, “ἀπάντησις, *apantēsis*,” *TDNT* 1:380–81. Cf. Acts 28:15 (*eis apantēsin hēmin*); also the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt 25:6).

<sup>25</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135.

<sup>26</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 196–233; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

*conclude that no evidence for such a separation is found in any of the three principal texts on the rapture.*"<sup>28</sup>

Second, critics compare these texts with the Olivet Discourse<sup>29</sup> to demonstrate the unity of the rapture with the posttribulational coming.<sup>30</sup> Critics argue that the Lord's coming described in Matthew 24:29–31 is the same event as His coming described in 1 Thess 4:15–5:11 and 2 Thess 2:1–11. Items argued to be parallel include 1) "the word of the Lord," taken to be the oral tradition of the Olivet Discourse; 2) the coming of the Lord; 3) the accompanying presence of angel(s); 4) the trumpet; 5) a resurrection; and, 6) the gathering of the elect. Further, the common recognition that the resurrection of OT saints occurs after the Tribulation (Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:1–3, 13), connected with a trumpet and an angel, is noted to be strikingly similar to Paul's description of the Resurrection-Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4. Moo contends that:

. . . the depiction of the end-time events in Matthew 24–25 is clearly parallel to the description of the Parousia found in Paul's epistles, directed to the *church*. . . Particular attention should be directed to the obvious parallels between the Olivet Discourse and *both* 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (the Parousia and the Rapture) and 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (the Parousia and the judgment on the wicked) . . . Paul clearly describes in these two passages what Jesus depicts as *one event*—showing that it is illegitimate to separate the Parousia of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the Parousia of 2 Thessalonians 2 in time.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence of the unity of the rapture and the posttribulational coming is further mounted in 2 Thessalonians 2.<sup>32</sup> Briefly, in verse 1, Paul makes a reference to "the coming (*parousía*) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him," which is an

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 200 (emphasis in original); cf. 196–200.

<sup>29</sup> Matt 24:3–25:46; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–38; cf. Luke 17:22–37.

<sup>30</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 212–23; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104–5, 135; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 72–4.

<sup>31</sup> Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," (1984), 193–94.

<sup>32</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 206–12; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 46–7.

unmistakable reference to the rapture.<sup>33</sup> In verse 8 the *parousía* is directly referenced at the posttribulational destruction of the Antichrist, “whom the Lord will . . . bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (*parousía*).” A second argument is made in this passage regarding the Day of the Lord, which is equated with the *parousía* (verses 1–2). It is argued that verses 3 through 8 list two identifiable events that must transpire before that Day, or the *parousía*, occur.<sup>34</sup> It is concluded that the rapture takes place at the *parousía* on the day of the Lord, which occurs at the posttribulational return of Christ.

Third, the book of Revelation is examined to demonstrate that there is no separate rapture coming.<sup>35</sup> Critics argue that there is only one coming of Christ in Revelation and that coming is posttribulational.<sup>36</sup> Moo presents the case for a recapitulation hermeneutic of Revelation, which he argues easily resolves “most of the differences cited as requiring a distinction between the pretribulational rapture and the posttribulational coming . . . .”<sup>37</sup> From these exegetical arguments of the major rapture and second coming texts critics object that the NT teaches anything other than a single future coming of the Lord.

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<sup>33</sup> The “gathering together to Him” is a clear reference to 1 Thess 4:16–17 and is an uncontested point. Cf. Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 217; Robert L. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” in *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Robert L. Thomas, Ralph Earle, and D. Edmond Hiebert; EBC 11; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 92.

<sup>34</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 206–12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 223–33; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 102–4; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 71–5.

<sup>36</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 223–33; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 75–77, 96–102.

<sup>37</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 233, n. 107. Moo cites J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 206–7; John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question: A Comprehensive Biblical Study of the Translation of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1957; repr., 1968), 101–2.

### *The Hermeneutical Objection*

The fourth element is hermeneutical. Critics object that pretribulationism substitutes a more complex interpretation for a natural and simple explanation of the texts.<sup>38</sup> Ladd writes,

This writer [Ladd] takes as a basic hermeneutical principle that in disputed questions of interpretation, the simpler view is to be preferred; *the burden of proof rests upon the more elaborate explanation*. . . . If the Coming of Christ, the Resurrection and the Rapture are not a single indivisible event followed immediately thereafter by the punishment of Antichrist and the inauguration of the kingdom, the burden of proof rests on those who would elaborate this basic outline by dividing the coming of Christ into two aspects and the first resurrection into two parts. Unless such a proof is forthcoming, the necessary inference is that this division of the coming of Christ and the resurrection into two parts is invalid, . . . .<sup>39</sup>

Ladd later writes, “The strong balance of probability rests with the simpler view, . . . .”<sup>40</sup>

Since there are “other interpretations which are at least equally possible and valid,”

“pretribulationism is an unnecessary inference.”<sup>41</sup> Moo writes that in light of this

principle of logic the pretribulation rapture is more complicated than necessary because it

posits “two ‘comings,’ two different ‘three and a half’ periods of time, two earthquakes at

the end, two trumpet blasts, and two separate resurrections of the saints at the end (Isa

25:6–8; 66:22–24).”<sup>42</sup> Critics thus argue that proper interpretive method requires the

simplest solution to be held and the two comings or two phases required by

pretribulationism adds an unnecessary complexity.

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<sup>38</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder,” (2010), 274; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 71, 103, 165–7.

<sup>39</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 165–66 (emphasis in original).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>42</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder,” (2010), 274.

### *The Theological Objection*

The fifth element is theological and is itself composed of several arguments. Critics either attempt to discredit the theological foundation upon which the pretribulation rapture is supposedly based, i.e. dispensationalism, or they discount the arguments that necessitate two separate events.

First, critics argue that the two comings are only necessitated because pretribulationists improperly divide the saints of God between Israel and the church. Particularly, the dispensational system and its division between the church and Israel are rejected.<sup>43</sup> Payne begins by tracing the origin of the pretribulation rapture to the Plymouth Brethren movement that began in 1825 at Dublin and the associated rise of dispensationalism.<sup>44</sup> He then states that advocates of this new theological system who taught a distinction between the church and Israel, “freely admit that their distinctive reconstruction of the Lord’s coming stems from their view of the church, . . . .”<sup>45</sup> Payne further argues that this position “was an extreme one, which in its dichotomy inevitably affected the unity of Scripture.”<sup>46</sup>

Second, critics argue that since the church is not promised exemption from tribulation then a rapture prior to the final tribulation is unwarranted.<sup>47</sup> Payne argues that “. . . no verse in Scripture teaches the church’s exemption from the tribulation and that many teach its participation, continuing on the earth until the glorious appearing of her Lord. . . . Christ assured His own that in the world the church has tribulation (John

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<sup>43</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 31; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 130–36.

<sup>44</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 31; Cf. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 40–60.

<sup>45</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 186–94; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 49; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 123; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 84–8.

16:33), and he deliberately refrained from praying that she be taken out of the world (17:15).”<sup>48</sup> Further, the wrath in the Tribulation is argued to be Satanic. Gundry writes, “The tribulation of the seventieth week has to do, then, not with God’s wrath against sinners, but with the wrath of Satan, the Antichrist, and the wicked against the saints.”<sup>49</sup> Since believers are promised no protection against human wrath, which the Tribulation is, there is no need for a pretribulation rapture.

Third, critics argue that the imminence of the coming of the Lord, defined as an “any moment” possibility, is not necessary; therefore, the rapture as a distinct coming without signs is not required.<sup>50</sup> Thus, while pretribulationists use the notion of an imminent coming of the Lord to argue for a pretribulation rapture, critics argue that it is only imminent for unbelievers.<sup>51</sup> Ladd writes, “It is equally clear that the ‘watching’ enjoined does not refer to fixing the attention upon some event which is likely to occur at any moment. The context makes it clear that the ‘watching’ means *to be spiritually awake* in contrast to the world which is slumbering in the sleep of sin.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore critics argue that no theological requirement exists to support a two-phased coming of the Lord.

### ***The Practical Objection***

The sixth element is practical. Critics point out that the exhortations given to the church indicate that there is no distinction between the Lord’s coming at the rapture and His coming at the end of the Tribulation.<sup>53</sup> Moo states, “[B]elievers are exhorted to look for

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<sup>48</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 123.

<sup>49</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 49.

<sup>50</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 105–19.

<sup>51</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture: A Posttribulation Response,” (2010), 91.

<sup>52</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 110; cf. 1 Thess 5:7, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 196; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 105–11; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 11–12, 105–19.

and to live in the light of this glorious event. And, while some texts obviously place this coming *after* the final tribulation, there are *none* that equally obviously place it before the final tribulation.”<sup>54</sup> Of the numerous passages that exhort disciples to “watch,” Ladd writes, “[A]ll of these exhortations have reference to the glorious appearing of the Son of man at the end of the Tribulation.”<sup>55</sup>

Paul’s response in 2 Thessalonians 2 to that church’s anxiety is also used as a practical argument. Everyone agrees that the Thessalonians were troubled because they thought themselves to be in the day of the Lord.<sup>56</sup> Hoekema asks, “What, now, would be the point of Paul’s warning if these believers would be removed from the earth before the tribulation?”<sup>57</sup> Ladd writes, “For if the Church is not to be in the world when the Man of Lawlessness appears, Paul’s argument to the Thessalonians seems to be rather badly directed.”<sup>58</sup> Ladd concludes:

If this “day of the Lord” is to be identified with the glorious Revelation of Christ at the end of the Tribulation, then Paul’s argument in this prophecy has omitted its most important point, namely, that the rapture is the first event which will take place; and since the Rapture had not taken place and the Thessalonian Christians were still on earth, it was impossible that the Day of the Lord had come. . . . Paul writes as though Christians needed to be warned against the deception of the Antichrist, . . . One would naturally conclude from reading Paul’s words that the coming of the Lord, our gathering together unto Him, and the day of the Lord are one and the same event which will be preceded by the apostasy and the Man of Lawlessness.<sup>59</sup>

Critics therefore object arguing that NT exhortations to watchfulness make more sense with a single event than with a two-phased coming.

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<sup>54</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 196.

<sup>55</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 112 (emphasis in original). Ladd citations include Matt 24:42–44; Luke 12:37, 39; Mark 13:33–37; 1 Thess 5:3–5; Titus 2:13; Rev 3:2, 3; et al.

<sup>56</sup> Showers, *Maranatha!* 225; Moo, “Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 188; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167.

<sup>57</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167.

<sup>58</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74; cf. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 206–12.

<sup>59</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74.

## ***Conclusion***

This brief survey has shown that the fundamental elements of the two-comings objection are: 1) the pretribulation doctrine is a significant deviation from the historic belief of the church; 2) the NT words for the coming of the Lord cannot be used to support a two-phased coming; 3) exegesis of the major rapture and second coming texts argue for a single coming; 4) proper interpretive method requires the simplest solution to be held and a pretribulation rapture adds an unnecessary complexity; 5) no theological requirement exists to support a two-phased coming; 6) NT exhortations to watchfulness make more sense with one coming than two comings.

### **Pretribulation Models for the Nature of the Coming of the Lord**

Alan Hultberg states that “the nature of Christ’s return” distinguishes pre- and midtribulationism from posttribulationism in that the former two understand the coming of the Lord as a two-stage event, i.e., the rapture and the return to earth, whereas the latter does not.<sup>60</sup> Expanding this slightly, the nature of the coming of the Lord could be defined as how the rapture, the final Tribulation, and return of Christ to earth are understood in relation to the NT teaching of the coming of the Lord. With this definition in mind, a survey of pretribulationist works will show that there are three primary models of the nature of the coming of the Lord by which pretribulationists present their view. For pretribulationists, the rapture and return could be explained as: 1) two distinct comings of the Lord separated by the wrath of God; 2) one coming of the Lord with two phases or

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<sup>60</sup> Alan Hultberg, “Introduction,” 14; cf. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 165, where he titles chapter 13, “The Nature of the Second Coming,” and examines “the question of whether the Second Coming is a single event or is divided into two stages.”

stages separated by the wrath of God; or, 3) one coming of the Lord as an extended complex of events including the wrath of God.

The following analysis will provide the defining characteristics of each model. It is not the intention of classifying individual pretribulationists into one particular model as other related elements of a given writer's views may overlap with someone from another model. In fact, the fundamental beliefs among pretribulationists are so closely held that there has been little to no intramural debate on this topic.<sup>61</sup> All pretribulationists agree that the rapture and the posttribulational return are two distinct events separated by a period of time in which the wrath of God falls on earth.<sup>62</sup> Thus the purpose of this study is threefold: First, this study will attempt to demonstrate that while pretribulationists are in agreement that the rapture and return are distinct events, there is no clear consensus on how to explain that belief in respect to the nature of the coming of the Lord. Second, this study will seek to demonstrate that it is possible to present the pretribulation view with different models of the nature of the coming of the Lord. Third, this study will attempt to demonstrate that one model is naturally better conceived to respond to the two-comings objection, and can serve as a valid foundation upon which to build the proposed model.

#### Model 1: Two Distinct Comings Separate From the Wrath of God

Pretribulationists presenting the first model differentiate the rapture and the posttribulational return as two separate and distinct physical "comings" of the Lord. Historically, while advocates of all three models can be found in the history of

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<sup>61</sup> Of all the pretribulationists identified in the following study, not one was found that criticized another pretribulationist on the issue of the nature of the coming of the Lord as herein defined.

<sup>62</sup> Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," in *Three Views on the Rapture* (1984), 58, notes that pretribulationists are unanimous on the view that the Tribulation is the outpouring of divine wrath.

pretribulationism, most pretribulation scholars surveyed present this model.<sup>63</sup> Further, the pretribulation system is commonly described using the terms of this model.<sup>64</sup> Thomas

Ice would be a contemporary representative of this group when he writes,

A key factor in understanding the New Testament's teaching of the pretribulation rapture revolves around the fact that *two future comings* of Christ are presented. The *first coming* is the catching up into the clouds of the church before the seven-year tribulation and *the second coming* occurs at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns to the earth to begin His 1,000 year kingdom. Anyone desirous of insight into the biblical teaching of the rapture and second advent must study and decide whether Scripture speaks of *one or two future events*.<sup>65</sup>

Mal Couch, another of this group, calls the rapture and the posttribulation appearing “distinct literal, historic comings . . . .”<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, though Couch calls *parousia* a technical term, which usually indicates that the term has the same definition each time it is used, he notes that *parousia* “can be applied to the rapture of the church *or* to the

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<sup>63</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The End Times in Chronological Order: A Complete Overview to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 2012); Robert Dean, Jr., “Three Foundational Rapture Passages” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Pre-Trib Study Group, Dallas, Tex., 6 December 2011), 15–16, n.l. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Dean-TheThreeMajorRapture.pdf>; Showers, *Maranatha!*; Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, “Second Coming of Christ,” in *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1997), 184–87; Mal Couch, “Major Rapture Terms and Passages,” in *When the Trumpet Sounds* (ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy; Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1995), 26–56; Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (rev. and expanded ed.; Chicago: Moody, 2006), 158; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1986; repr., Chicago: Moody, 1999), ; Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 72–86; Leon Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 42; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 155–56; John F. Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” *BSac* 101 (1944), 284; Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 193–218.

<sup>64</sup> For example, the entry for the “Pretribulation Rapture,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*, 349, states, “Generally, pretribulationists hold to three comings of Christ, . . . The first coming of Christ was at his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth. The second coming will be the secret rapture, . . . the third coming occurs when Christ returns with his church after the Tribulation to reign on earth during the millennium.”

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Ice, “Differences Between the Rapture and the Second Coming,” *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015] (emphasis added). Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-DifferencesBetweenTheRapt.pdf>; cf. Ice & Demy, “Second Coming of Christ,” 184–87.

<sup>66</sup> Couch, “Major Rapture Terms and Passages,” 26. On page 26, Couch distances himself from the historical amillennial position that “the word *parousia* seemed to sum up the doctrine of only one return of Jesus.”

coming of Christ to establish the millennial kingdom.”<sup>67</sup> More recently, Renald Showers writes, “[T]he Rapture and the coming of Christ with His angels will be two separate events.”<sup>68</sup> While Showers is reluctant to call the rapture “a coming” of the Lord, it is nevertheless the implication in his section on the imminent coming of the Lord.<sup>69</sup> Showers refers to the imminent coming of Christ, which is clearly a reference to the rapture, “the next coming of Christ.”<sup>70</sup> When defining the rapture, he refers to it as “this coming of Christ.”<sup>71</sup>

Those presenting this model, while referring to the rapture as a coming of the Lord, nevertheless designate the posttribulational return to earth *the second coming*.<sup>72</sup> Rhodes writes, “[T]he rapture involves Christ coming *for* His saints prior to the tribulation, whereas at the second coming He will come *with* His saints to the earth . . . .”<sup>73</sup> For this group, the two-comings objection is seemingly irrelevant since there is no problem in identifying multiple “comings” of the Lord.

Model 1 makes no direct causal link between the coming of the Lord and the wrath of God being poured out on the earth during the Tribulation.<sup>74</sup> While Model 1 understands the Tribulation to be the outpouring of the wrath of God in judgment, and even sometimes states that it is from the Lord Jesus Christ, it is never spoken of as a

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 50 (emphasis added); cf. p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> Showers, *Maranatha*, 176.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 127–49.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 12. In virtually all other places, Showers avoids referring to the rapture as *a coming* of Christ. Instead, he writes that Christ raptures the church, or the church is raptured, or simply refers to it as “the rapture;” e.g., p. 176.

<sup>72</sup> Showers, *Maranatha!* 59; Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 157–87; Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord*, 87–88.

<sup>73</sup> Rhodes, *The End Times in Chronological Order*, 45.

<sup>74</sup> Dean, “Three Foundational Rapture Passages,” 7, seems to completely remove any connection of Tribulation wrath from either the rapture or the second coming when he writes, “At the Rapture, there is no judgment on the unsaved upon the earth, the Second Coming concludes God’s judgments on the earthdwellers.”

coming of God or the Lord.<sup>75</sup> The rapture is a rescue “coming” whereby believers are removed from the earth by the Lord before the wrath of God falls upon it.<sup>76</sup> Any wrath or judgment associated with the coming of the Lord is said to occur at the posttribulation second coming.<sup>77</sup> The Tribulation is thus distinct from the second coming in that “the second coming will end the tribulation and begin the millennium.”<sup>78</sup> The Tribulation is merely the seven years of wrath leading up to the second coming.<sup>79</sup>

To summarize, for Model 1, the nature of the coming of the Lord is that of two distinct physical comings of the Lord, one at the rapture, and one in judgment at the end of the Tribulation, which is called the second coming. Other than the rapture being a rescue mission to remove believers from the earth, there is no indication that the Tribulation wrath of God is in any way connected to the Lord’s coming. Any wrath or judgment attributed to any coming of the Lord is that which occurs posttribulationally at the Lord’s return to earth. This model could be considered as teaching a second and a third coming of the Lord since there are two distinct physical comings of the Lord from heaven with no clear element to unify the two comings.

#### Model 2: One Coming with Two Phases (or Stages) Separate From the Wrath of God

Model 2 is a slightly nuanced version of Model 1. Pretribulationists presenting this model state that the rapture and the posttribulation return are *distinct stages* or *phases* of the

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<sup>75</sup> Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 61–3, clearly portrays the Tribulation as the wrath of God as initiated or commanded by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ; however, there is no connection made to the rapture or the coming of the Lord; cf. pp. 50–71; cf. Showers, *Maranatha!* 176; Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 172–73.

<sup>76</sup> Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 58, 61–63; Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 173; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 69; Wood, *Is the Rapture Next?* 20.

<sup>77</sup> Showers, *Maranatha!* 176; Thomas Ice, “God’s Coming Judgment,” *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-GodsComingJudgment.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Ice & Demy, “Second Coming of Christ,” 184.

<sup>79</sup> Rhodes, *The End Times in Chronological Order*, 97.

one second coming.<sup>80</sup> Gerald Stanton writes, “Pretribulationists do not believe that there are two second comings, . . . but that there is *one coming* incorporating *two separate movements*. . . .”<sup>81</sup> David L. Larson similarly argues for a “two-stage parousia,” which he identifies as “the Rapture and the Coming in Glory.”<sup>82</sup>

Like Model 1, the coming of the Lord is distinguished from the wrath of God being poured out on the earth during the Tribulation. Hitchcock writes, “the Rapture and the Second Coming are indeed bookends to the Tribulation: the Rapture happens *before* the Tribulation, and the Second Coming happens *after*. Nonetheless, I maintain that these are two stages of the same event, *separated by the events of the Tribulation*.”<sup>83</sup> Often, this Tribulation wrath is directly stated to be from God and connected with the day of the Lord prophecies.<sup>84</sup> While sometimes it is noted that the wrath is from the Lord Jesus Christ, Tribulational wrath is usually emphasized as being from God, either God the Father or God as Trinity, thereby diminishing any connection to Christ. For example, note the added emphasis in the following: “*God* will use the Tribulation to punish the godless, . . . especially for rejecting *His Son* . . . . [N]o one will be able to hide from

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<sup>80</sup> Mark L. Hitchcock, *The End: A Complete Overview of Bible Prophecy and the End of Days* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 149; David L. Larsen, “Probing the Critical Nexus of the Two-Stage Parousia” (paper presented at the 2010 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference. Dallas, Tex., December 7, 2010), n. p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Larsen-TheCriticalNexusofth.pdf>; Richard L. Mayhue, “Why a Pretribulational Rapture?” *MSJ* 13 (2002): 241–53; John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Second Coming: Signs of Christ’s Return and the End of the Age* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1999), 87, 220–21; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1986; rpt., Chicago: Moody, 1999), 557; Ellison, Stanley A. “The Apostasy as It Relates to the Lord’s Return,” *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ellisen-TheApostasyAsItRelat.pdf>; H. Wayne House, “Differences Between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Matthew 24,” *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/House-Differencesbetween1T.pdf>; Edward E. Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return: Two Aspects of Christ’s Coming,” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 156–60; Stanton, *Kept From the Hour*, 20–21; John A. Sproule, *In Defense of Pretribulationism: A Review of Robert Gundry’s “The Church and the Tribulation”* (Birmingham, Al: Southeastern Bible College, 1974. Rev. Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1980), 36.

<sup>81</sup> Stanton, *Kept From the Hour*, 20 (emphasis added).

<sup>82</sup> Larsen, “Probing the Critical Nexus of the Two-Stage Parousia,” n. p.

<sup>83</sup> Hitchcock, *The End*, 160, (emphasis added).

<sup>84</sup> Hitchcock, *The End*, 233–39; Ellison, “The Apostasy as It Relates to the Lord’s Return.”

*God's judgment* during the Tribulation.”<sup>85</sup> Any wrath associated with *the coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ is connected only to his posttribulational return.<sup>86</sup>

Model 2 can be commended as an attempt to unify the coming of the Lord; however, though presenters of this Model attempt to emphasize one second coming of the Lord, they clearly have difficulty removing the idea of two comings. For example, Mark L. Hitchcock is a recent presenter of this model, and while he stresses that the second coming is *one coming*, he presents two distinct “coming of the Lord” events:

The New Testament teaches that Christ *will come for* His church to escort her to His Father’s House (John 14:3). And [the New Testament] also teaches that He *will come with* His saints when He descends from heaven to judge His enemies and establish His glorious 1,000 year kingdom on earth (Zech 14:5; Rev 19:14). I view this *as one coming* that will occur in *two distinct phases or stages* separated by at least seven years.<sup>87</sup>

Hitchcock uses this idea of one coming made up of two separate comings to explain the apparent paradox between signs and imminence. He first notes that the NT describes the coming of the Lord as signless (at the rapture), yet preceded by numerous signs (the second coming). Then after calling this a patent contradiction, he states, “but, by calling them two stages of the same event, the pre-Trib view successfully harmonizes these two descriptions of Christ’s coming.”<sup>88</sup> Hitchcock is correct that something cannot simultaneously be both imminent and non-imminent.<sup>89</sup> The problem is that if the NT does in fact teach that the coming of the Lord can occur at any moment and yet must be preceded by signs, then there is either a logical contradiction or two different comings are

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<sup>85</sup> Hitchcock, *The End*, 238–39 (emphasis added); cf. House, “Differences Between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Matthew 24.”

<sup>86</sup> It is often noted that the posttribulational return of Christ is His coming in judgment. E.g., Hitchcock, *The End*, 151–52; House, “Differences Between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Matthew 24,” n.p.

<sup>87</sup> Mark L. Hitchcock, “An Overview of Pretribulational Arguments,” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Pre-Trib Study Group, Dallas, Tex., 7 December 2011), 4. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Hitchcock-AnOverviewofPretribu.pdf> (emphasis added).

<sup>88</sup> Hitchcock, *The End*, 149.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

in view. Calling them two stages of one coming does not suffice since both stages are called in Scripture a coming of the Lord.<sup>90</sup>

This model's attempt at unity is further undermined by its lack of an exegetical basis for one coming in two phases. Those holding to this model insist that the NT teaches a two-phased coming of the Lord while at the same time assigning every reference to the coming of the Lord to either the rapture or the posttribulational return.<sup>91</sup> If there are no instances of a NT writer referring to the unified event itself, of which the rapture and return are merely phases, then how can it be affirmed that a two-phased unified coming is actually being taught?<sup>92</sup> Those of Model 2 have correctly sought to unify the coming of the Lord; however, in their attempt to affirm the distinctions between the rapture and the return, they have failed to identify any text that clearly references that unified coming. Presenting exegetical and theological arguments for a necessary distinction in time between the rapture and the posttribulational return may demonstrate that the two events are distinct,<sup>93</sup> but it falls short of establishing that the unified coming in two phases is the biblical model. In other words, there may be another model that explains a pretribulational rapture, unifies the coming of the Lord, and that does not resort to dissecting that coming into multiple phases. With this failure to exegetically support a unified coming of the Lord there is no foundation to build a theological model of that unified coming. As a result, those presenting this model often revert back to Model 1's terminology of two distinct comings.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Thess 2:8.

<sup>91</sup> Hitchcock, *The End*, 150–53; Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return,” 156–58.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 158.

<sup>93</sup> Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return,” 159–62; Stanton, *Kept From the Hour*, 253–67.

<sup>94</sup> Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return,” 162, concludes his essay by saying, “We have clearly seen from the New Testament that the rapture and the second coming are different in nature and therefore separate events. This observation, that there are *two future comings*, is an important element for

To summarize, like Model 1, those holding to Model 2 may refer to the rapture and return as “a coming” of the Lord; however, its distinction is in its consistent assertion that the two events are part of one coming. In this contention, Model 2 is clearly an attempt to unify the future coming of the Lord, at least in title, while maintaining the distinction of a pretribulation rapture. There is however, little exegetical, theological, or even logical basis for stating that these two events are part of one unified coming as opposed to two separate comings. Because a conceptual development is evident from Model 1 in its assigning an abstract concept of separate phases to what the first model would call a literal coming, Model 2 can be considered a different Model; however, adding the language of “phases” presents logical and exegetical problems that ultimately undermine the unity it seeks to achieve. It is thus in no better position than Model 1 for answering the two-comings objection.

Model 3: One Coming as an Extended Complex of Events Causing the Wrath of God  
Pretribulationists presenting the third model argue that the coming of the Lord, or the parousia, refers to a period of time that begins before the Tribulation and incorporates a complex of events. At a minimum, this complex of events includes the rapture, the wrath of God, the day of the Lord, and the return. Only seven pretribulationists included in this

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determining the timing of the rapture. It is not surprising that non-pretribulationists often ignore these biblical distinctions. A literal interpretation of the passages involved in *the two comings* is best represented by a pretribulationist perspective” (emphasis added); MacArthur, *The Second Coming*, 220–21, defines the Rapture as “the *coming* of Christ in the air *for* His saints (1 Thess 4:14–17)—as opposed to His *coming* to earth *with* His saints (Zech 14:5)” (emphasis added); Hitchcock, *The End*, 149, notes that the “two facets of Christ’s second coming: (1) He will come for His church *to escort her to His Father’s house* (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), and (2) He will come with His saints *when He descends from heaven* to judge His enemies and establish His glorious one-thousand-year Kingdom on earth (Zechariah 14:4–5; 1 Thessalonians 3:13)” (emphasis added). These are clearly two different “coming” events since they begin at different times and they begin from the same place, i.e., Christ returns to heaven after the first coming and later comes once again from heaven.

study have explicitly presented this model;<sup>95</sup> however, there are others who have provided supportive evidence without explicitly presenting the model as herein stated.<sup>96</sup> Model 3 is also frequently presented by Prewrath advocates, though they would argue for a beginning point that is sometime after the abomination of desolation.<sup>97</sup>

Briefly stated, Model 3 sees one coming of the Lord that begins with the pretribulational descent of the Lord from heaven into the clouds where the church is raptured to meet Him in the air.<sup>98</sup> The Lord remains and is present throughout the Tribulation period with raptured believers. From this position just above earth, and shrouded in the clouds, the Lord metes out judgment upon the earth. The Lord and raptured believers are invisible to the natural world until the end of the Tribulation. At that time His coming is manifested to everyone on earth, and then they will see Him coming with the clouds of heaven.<sup>99</sup> The Lord will then complete His descent to earth in openly visible glory.

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<sup>95</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 25–73; Thomas, “1 & 2 Thessalonians”; Robert L. Thomas, “Imminence in the NT, Especially Paul’s Thessalonian Epistles,” *MSJ* 13 (2002), 191–214; Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 62–71; John F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture: The Church’s Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1950), 64–88; W. E. Vine and C. F. Hogg, *Vine’s Topical Commentary: Prophecy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 115–40; I. M. Haldeman, *The Coming of Christ Both Premillennial and Imminent* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1906).

<sup>96</sup> John F. Hart, “A Defense of the Pretribulational Rapture in Matthew 24:36–44,” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Pre-Trib Study Group, Dallas, Tex., 6 December 2011), 17, cf. 1–34. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Hart-ADefenseoftheRapture.pdf>; James F. Stitzinger, “The Rapture in Twenty Centuries of Biblical Interpretation,” *MSJ* 13 (2002): 149–71; Stanley D. Toussaint, “Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 235–50; William J. Erdman, *The Parousia of Christ a Period of Time; or, When Will the Church be Translated?* (Chicago: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), which Reiter, “History” (1984), 234 n. 13, states was probably written between 1886 and 1895; Stitzinger, “The Rapture,” 164, notes that as early as 1828 John Nelson Darby was teaching “a two-stage distinction in the second coming of Christ. This included a quiet appearance of Christ to remove all true Christians from the earth (*the presence of Christ*), . . . after which would be the public appearing of Christ in glory” (emphasis added).

<sup>97</sup> Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” 142–50; Charles Cooper, “The Parousia of Jesus Christ,” *Parousia* 9 (Fall 1998), 1–8, [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: [http://www.solagroup.org/products/pdf\\_files/parousia09.pdf](http://www.solagroup.org/products/pdf_files/parousia09.pdf); Robert Van Kampen, *The Rapture Question Answered: Plain & Simple* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1997), .

<sup>98</sup> 1 Thess 4:15–17.

<sup>99</sup> 2 Thess 2:8; Matt 24:29–31; Rev 1:7.

This model has been supported variously by different proponents. While the distinctive elements of this model are clearly presented in the seven works cited above, no single work is complete in its presentation of available supporting lines of evidence. Some appeal to the NT word for the coming of the Lord, *parousía*, as evidence of an extended presence of the Lord during the Tribulation period.<sup>100</sup> They note that the primary meaning of *parousía* is “presence” and then provide a survey of NT usages to confirm this translation. C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine write, “The Parousia of the Lord Jesus is thus a period with a beginning, a course, and a conclusion.”<sup>101</sup> Some omit this lexical study and simply retain the conceptual model itself.<sup>102</sup> For example, Herman Hoyt affirms that the second coming “in its effects covers a vast period of time,” and that it “comprises a whole series of events.”<sup>103</sup> He also states that “. . . the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to rapture His church, and His continued presence in relation to events in the earth, mark the next major movement in the unfolding of the plan of God . . . .”<sup>104</sup> Further, Craig Blaising presents a thoroughly exegetical case for this model by arguing for an extended view of the day of the Lord, which has not been significantly argued by any previous proponent.<sup>105</sup> In his presentation, the coming of the Lord, the *parousia*, is a synonymous term with the day of the Lord; however, he does not provide a detailed lexical study of the word as evidence. Despite the various presentations the fundamental notion that is common to all presenters of this model is that the Lord comes

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<sup>100</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64–77; Vine and Hogg, *Vine’s Topical Commentary: Prophecy*, 117–19; Prewrath: Cooper, “The Parousia of Jesus Christ,” 1–8.

<sup>101</sup> Charles F. Hogg and William E. Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Fincastle, Va.: Scripture Truth Book Co., 1959), 88; cf. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 42–43, 50–53; Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 92–93.

<sup>102</sup> Hoyt, *The End Times*, 63–71.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>105</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 25–73.

from heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation to rapture the church, and remains there meting out judgment until He completes His descent at the end of that period.

Unlike the first two models, Model 3 directly links the coming of the Lord to the events of the Tribulation. John F. Strombeck writes, “At the parousia, then, the Lord descends from heaven not only to rapture the Church but to bring in the day of the Lord with its destruction upon His enemies.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, Model 3 holds that the Tribulation occurs because the Lord has come. Strombeck continues:

Inasmuch as parousia denotes not only an arrival but also a subsequent presence with, these three occurrences of the parousia of the Son of man<sup>107</sup> teach that at His arrival the judgments of God, as seen in the sudden destruction, commence. During the subsequent presence, He shall mete out judgments, but does not reveal Himself in power and glory to the tribes of the earth until after the tribulation.<sup>108</sup>

Some proponents, though not all, also tie in the *parousia* of the Lord directly to the DL.<sup>109</sup> In his essay in the 2010 published rapture debate, Blaising provides an in-depth exegesis of the biblical theme of the day of the Lord. In it he connects the idea of an extended coming of the Lord and the OT day of the Lord. He writes,

The point is that the entire day of the Lord is a coming of the Lord in judgment. All of its destructive elements—for however long their duration or however extensive their reach—are poured out by the God who has “come” enacting this judgment. This is true whether or not the Lord makes an “appearance” in or at the end of the day. This historical “days of the Lord” did not involve a theophany even though they were “days” on which the Lord came in judgment. The theophany at the end of the day of the Lord in Zechariah 14 climaxes an extended event in which he has come in judgment—the point being that the coming does not just take place at the end of an extended disaster which is merely its prelude. Following the imagery of a military campaign, the entire campaign,

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<sup>106</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> Matt 24:27, 37–39.

<sup>108</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 72.

<sup>109</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 25–73; Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 54–62; Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 91–102; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 7246–54, 64–77; cf. Vine and Hogg, *Vine’s Topical Commentary: Prophecy*, 120–21, who view the day of the Lord as occurring after the Tribulation.

whether the devastation of the countryside or the siege and battle for the city—however long these last—is due to the coming of a general and his army who are perpetrating it. His coming is not merely his triumphal entry into the defeated city at the end of the campaign. His coming is the whole destructive event that completes itself when the city is defeated and he then makes his entry into it.<sup>110</sup>

Blaising’s presentation also provides a conceptual clue for seeing the coming of the Lord as an extended period of time. In the above quote, Blaising presents the Lord as a coming general holding station outside an enemy city besieging it until it succumbs. Only after that period of siege does the general enter victoriously into the city.

Those of Model 3 go to great lengths to demonstrate exegetically a unified coming of the Lord that consists of a rapture and a return that is separated in time. It is truly one coming because at the rapture, the Lord remains present inflicting the wrath of God upon the earth until the time of His posttribulational descent. For the purposes of responding to the two-comings objection, Model 3 is in a significantly better position, assuming that its key tenets can be demonstrated. It conceptualizes the Lord’s coming as one uninterrupted action, thus making it a single or unified coming. By contrast, Model 1 argues for two comings that is separated by and from the wrath of God, and Model 2 cannot logically sustain a one coming view.

### **Common Problems of the Pretribulational Models**

Given that pretribulationism’s defining element is its separation of the rapture from the return, the vast majority of the responses to the two comings objection have simply been arguments for a pretribulation rapture.<sup>111</sup> With the exception of a few cases, principally

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<sup>110</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 49–50.

<sup>111</sup> A quick review of the following major works will demonstrate a very common line of arguments used to respond to the typical objections: Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 185; cf. 157–87; Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return,” 152–62; Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 50–86; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*.

those of Model 3,<sup>112</sup> pretribulationists have responded by developing and compiling exegetical and theological arguments to the effect that there are in fact two future comings of the Lord.<sup>113</sup> A presentation of these arguments is not necessary since they only attempt to establish that the two events are distinct instead of providing a theological model that explains why they are distinct and yet portrayed as a unity in the NT.<sup>114</sup> It will be more beneficial for the current study to identify the major problems and deficiencies common to pretribulationist models of the nature of the coming of the Lord. The following are those problems that apply to at least two of the three models.

### Misunderstanding The Two-Comings Objection

The first problem with the pretribulation response, primarily for Models 1 & 2, is its apparent misunderstanding and possibly even denial of the point critics are raising. Critics are objecting because pretribulationism in some way rejects the coming of the Lord as a unified, i.e., a single movement. Affirming that the Lord's coming is in "stages," or "phases," as those of Model 2 do, does not keep it unified in the sense that the critic means. Gundry rejects this nuance stating,

We may detect a struggle to maintain unity and separateness at the same time. But two separate movements from heaven to earth cannot by any

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<sup>112</sup> By contrast to this tendency among pretribulationists, Blaising set aside the usual theological argument and argued his position "by means of a context established through clear intertextual connections." Blaising, "The Pretribulation Rapture Position," 69.

<sup>113</sup> Mayhue, "Why a Pretribulationist Rapture," 242, writes, "It will not be the weight of any one reason that makes pretribulationism so compelling, but rather the combined force of all the lines of reasoning;" Hindson, "The Rapture and the Return," 153, likewise writes, "Pretribulationists merely need prove that the *dissimilarities* between the rapture passages and the return passages are significant enough to indicate that they are *separate* events;" cf. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 179–81; Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 206–07.

<sup>114</sup> No criticism of the usual argument method pretribulationists use is intended since most if not all points are shared by this writer. It is merely that the current thesis is attempting to establish the validity of the pretribulation rapture from a biblically conceived model of the nature of the coming of the Lord. Whereas the former method is in a sense arguing that pretribulationism is necessary as the only logical possibility, the current thesis is arguing that pretribulationism is reasonable, if not also necessary, because it is in accord with the biblical understanding of the nature of the Lord's coming.

stretch of fancy be considered one coming. Jesus' first advent involved a somewhat lengthy period of sojourn upon the earth, but there was only one movement from heaven to earth. The two movements posited in Pretribulationism do indeed violate the law of parsimony in interpretation.<sup>115</sup>

To the critic, the pretribulation rapture requires that the Lord come down from heaven, raptures the church, ascend back to heaven for a period of time, and then return once again to earth. Stating that the coming of the Lord has two phases merely bypasses the real criticism being drawn. For the posttribulationist, "unified" means that the Lord comes from heaven to earth, and somewhere in the process before He actually steps foot on earth, believers are raptured into the sky.<sup>116</sup> There is never a down, up, and back down again notion of the Lord's coming.<sup>117</sup>

Critics, including Moo and Gundry, note that the same words and phrases for the Lord's coming appear in both rapture and return texts indicating that a single coming is in view.<sup>118</sup> Whenever Scripture refers to the coming of the Lord, there is never a clear indication that the rapture coming occurs at least seven years before the posttribulation coming.<sup>119</sup> Gundry argues,

Why in the entire NT do we meet not one unambiguous statement that Jesus will come before the tribulation? Is it not strange that what is supposed to be the blessed hope of the Church is not once chronologically pinpointed in the book of the Church, while that "phase" of the second coming which is supposed *not* to be the hope of the Church is

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<sup>115</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 161–62.

<sup>116</sup> Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, 17, writes, "This Advent, though in itself a single crisis, will be accompanied and followed by a variety of phenomena . . . Believers who survive till the Advent will be transfigured and translated to meet the approaching Lord, together with the saints raised and changed at the first resurrection. Immediately following this Antichrist and his allies will be slain, and Israel, the covenant people, will repent and be saved, by looking upon Him whom they pierced."

<sup>117</sup> Speaking of 1 Thess 4:17, Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135, writes, "The very thought of "meeting" assumes that the party met continues to advance without pause to his destination, which means in this case, Christ's continuing *uninterruptedly* to earth" (emphasis added).

<sup>118</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 294–96; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 156–62; see both lexical and exegetical sections above for additional scholars who make this point.

<sup>119</sup> Hultberg, "Conclusion," in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 275.

categorically stated to occur after the tribulation—and that it is so stated several times?<sup>120</sup>

Even pretribulationists admit that the determination is based on textual clues rather than a clear statement identifying which “phase” it is.<sup>121</sup> Strombeck notes this very fact, thus affirming critics’ objection when he writes,

The question may be asked, What is there to hinder a parousia at the beginning of the tribulation and another at or near the end? The answer to this is that the disciples’ question (Matt 24:3) indicates that they knew of but one. Furthermore all three times that Jesus used the word parousia it was in the singular and each time the definite article was used. Thus it is clear that Jesus spoke about only one parousia.<sup>122</sup>

Models 1 and 2 offer no viable response to this evidence that the coming of the Lord is a unified event. Thus, conceptually at least, only Model 3 provides a reasonable response to this objection.

### Ambiguous Use of Theological Terminology

A second major problem, which appears in works by proponents of all three models, is ambiguous use of theological terminology. Terminology such as “the second coming,” “the return,” and “the parousia” are often used interchangeably to refer to the rapture, the posttribulational appearing of the Lord, and the complex of events surrounding and preceding that appearing. The preceding survey of the three models already demonstrated that the definition of these terms can vary among pretribulationists. The problem, however, is more significant than first stated since the terms themselves can vary within a pretribulationist’s own writing. For example, Edward E. Hindson writes:

The *return* of Christ is a *series of events* fulfilling all end-time prophecies. These include predictions of His coming *for* His church and His coming

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<sup>120</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 158.

<sup>121</sup> Couch, “Major Rapture Terms and Passages,” 50–51.

<sup>122</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 71.

with His church. Pretribulationists divide *the return* of Christ in two main phases: *the rapture* of the church and *the second coming* of Christ. In the first aspect, our Lord comes to take His own (the living and the dead) to be with him. In the second aspect, He *returns* with His resurrected and raptured saints to win the battle of Armageddon and to establish His kingdom on earth. . . . Just as the Scripture predicted two aspects of our Lord's first coming (His suffering and glory), so it predicts two aspects of His *second coming*.<sup>123</sup>

The second coming is explained as both the posttribulational return and the complex of events of which the posttribulational return is merely an aspect.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Thomas Ice writes,

A key factor in understanding the New Testament's teaching of the pretribulational rapture revolves around the fact that *two future comings* of Christ are presented. The *first coming* is the catching up into the clouds of the church before the seven-year tribulation and *the second coming* occurs at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns to the earth to begin His 1,000 year kingdom. Anyone desirous of insight into the biblical teaching of the rapture and second advent must study and decide whether Scripture speaks of *one or two future events*.<sup>125</sup>

Compare this with a later statement by Ice:

Christ's overall ministry has two phases which revolve around *His two comings*. *Phase one* took place at Christ's *first coming* when He came in humiliation to suffer. *Phase two* will begin at Christ's *second coming* when He will reign on earth in power and glory.<sup>126</sup>

In the first quote the first future coming is the rapture and in the second quote the first coming was the incarnation. Granted, he qualifies each with "future" but the point still

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<sup>123</sup> Hindson, "The Rapture and the Return," 156 (emphasis added); Compare to Ed Hindson, "The Rapture and the Glorious Appearing of Christ," *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Hindson-TheRaptureAndGloriou.pdf>, who states, "The *Second Coming* of Christ is a *series of events* fulfilling all end-time prophecies. These include predictions of Christ's coming for His Church and with His Church. Pretribulationists generally divide *the Second Coming* into two main phases: the Rapture of the Church and *the Glorious Appearing of Christ*" (emphasis added).

<sup>124</sup> See also Hitchcock, *The End*, 149–51, where on p. 149 the second coming is defined as including both the rapture and the posttribulational return and on p. 151 the second coming is defined as the posttribulational return only.

<sup>125</sup> Ice, "Differences Between the Rapture and the Second Coming," n.p. (emphasis added).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

remains that the usage is confusing. If his argument is consistent between the two statements, then the second coming is the rapture and not the posttribulation return.

Hindson and Ice are by no means isolated cases.<sup>127</sup> This ambiguous use of theological terminology is common among pretribulationists and can be expanded to include ambiguous use of other phrases such as “the Return,”<sup>128</sup> “the coming of Christ with His angels,”<sup>129</sup> and “the Revelation.”<sup>130</sup> This variety of terms to designate different aspects of the coming of the Lord demonstrates that pretribulationists have struggled to distinguish the rapture and posttribulation return with biblical language that both separates the events in time and reflects the unity of the Lord’s coming as portrayed by the NT.

### Insufficient Integration of Lexical Scholarship

Third, pretribulationists have insufficiently integrated lexical scholarship of NT words for the coming of the Lord into a pretribulation model. The three major words are *παρουσία*, *parousía* (“presence, or coming”), *ἀποκάλυψις*, *apokálypsis* (“revelation”), and *ἐπιφάνεια*,

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<sup>127</sup> See also Hitchcock, *The End*, 149–51.

<sup>128</sup> Most often used to refer to the posttribulation return to earth, but some use it to refer to the rapture: Wayne A. Brindle, “Biblical Evidence for the Imminence of the Rapture,” *BSac* 158 (2001), 138–151; Robert Gromacki, “The Imminent Return of Jesus Christ,” *GTJ* 6 (1965), 11–23. Some use “Return” for both the rapture and posttribulation descent: Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 147–59, 319.

<sup>129</sup> Only Showers, *Maranatha!* 15, 176–191, was found as using this as a semi-technical designation for the posttribulation return of the Lord. While there are angels present at the posttribulation return, Matt 16:27; 24:31, et. al., the identification of angels at this event is not helpful for pretribulationism since at least one angel is known to be present at the rapture (1 Thess 4:16). Further, other pretribulationists such as Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 85–6, argues that the revelation of the Lord from heaven with His mighty angels is referring to “a complex of events, including various phases of end-time happenings.”

<sup>130</sup> The revelation as referring to the posttribulation return: Gerald B. Stanton, “The Doctrine of Imminency: Is It Biblical?” in *When The Trumpet Sounds*, 223; Hoyt, *The End Times*, 69, 71; Leon Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 28; Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” 286; Charles F. Hogg, and William E. Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (Edinburgh: Oliphants, Ltd., 1919; repr., Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 70; The Revelation as referring to the complex of events: Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 85–6; Hultberg, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Prewrath Response,” 268.

*epipháneia* (“appearing”).<sup>131</sup> This insufficiency can be traced to John Walvoord and Charles Feinberg, who argued that these terms should be taken as non-technical with their meaning determined by context.<sup>132</sup> Prior to the mid-1940s, pretribulationists tended to regard these terms as technical, with *parousía* referring to the pretribulational coming presence of Christ in the air and *apokálypsis* and *epipháneia* referring to the posttribulation return to earth.<sup>133</sup> Based on the influence of Walvoord and Feinberg most pretribulationists since that time have used these terms non-technically.<sup>134</sup> For example, Couch argues that *parousía* does not have to mean “a coming to stay.”<sup>135</sup> He continues, “Nor does the word automatically have to relate to the second coming of Christ; that is, His coming *to* earth to reign on the throne of David. By context then, it may just be translated the ‘event,’ the ‘appearance,’ or the ‘visit.’”<sup>136</sup> The other two Greek terms likewise are used to refer to both events.<sup>137</sup> According to this method, there can be a *parousia* for the church and one for the world; a revelation for the church and one for the world; and, an appearing for the church and one for the world.<sup>138</sup>

There are at least two problems with this approach. First, this method seems to presuppose the pretribulation rapture to which the difference in context supposedly

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<sup>131</sup> Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” 283–89.

<sup>132</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1936), 205–8; Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” 283–89.

<sup>133</sup> Richard R. Reiter, “A History,” 30; Haldeman, *The Coming of Christ Both Premillennial and Imminent*; Albert Lindsay, “The Two Phases of Christ’s Return, the *Parousia* and the *Epiphany*,” in *The Sure Word of Prophecy* (ed. John W. Bradbury; New York: Revell, 1942), 268–72; W. H. Rogers, “The Second Coming of Christ,” in *Prophetic Messages for Modern Times by Speakers at the Colonial Hills Bible Conference Conducted in the Colonial Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia: March 19–26, 1944* (ed. Robert J. Wells; Dallas: Texas Printing, n.d.), 106–107.

<sup>134</sup> Reiter, “A History,” 31.

<sup>135</sup> Couch, “Major Rapture Terms and Passages,” 50.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 50–51.

<sup>137</sup> Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” 285–87.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

points.<sup>139</sup> Second, since the time of the work of Walvoord and Feinberg pretribulationists have largely ignored biblical and lexical evidence that demonstrates that these words were used as political and religious technical terms.<sup>140</sup> While these words were not used in a technical way in the NT apart from a direct reference to the Lord,<sup>141</sup> scholars have noted that their technical meanings shaped the writers of the NT both when they used them and when they did not.<sup>142</sup> Pretribulationists who adhere to a non-technical meaning for *parousía* are on very weak footing on this point. If in fact these words were considered and used in a technical sense by NT writers, then a unified event was most certainly in view in the NT.<sup>143</sup> The failure of a generation of pretribulationists to significantly interact with contemporary lexical research has prevented them from incorporating it into their model.<sup>144</sup> This non-technical view has had an effect on Model 3 proponents as well. No one since Strombeck has directly argued for an extended view of

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<sup>139</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 159.

<sup>140</sup> For *παρουσία*: Albrecht Oepke, “*παρουσία*, *πάρεμι*,” *TDNT* 5:858–70; Ceslas Spicq, “*παρουσία*, *parousia*, presence, arrival, visit, manifestation,” *TLNT* 3:53–55; Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Doran, 1927), 368–78; For *αποκάλυψις*: Albrecht Oepke, “*ἀποκαλύπτω*, *ἀποκάλυψις*,” *TDNT* 3:563–92; Ceslas Spicq, “*ἀποκάλυψις* *apokálypsis*,” *TLNT* 2:249–50; For *ἐπιφάνεια*: Rudolf Bultmann & Dieter Lührmann, “*ἐπιφαίνω*, *ἐπιφανής*, *ἐπιφάνεια*,” *TDNT* 9:7–10; Ceslas Spicq, “*ἐπιφαίνω*, *ἐπιφάνεια*, *ἐπιφανής*,” *TLNT* 2:65.

<sup>141</sup> For example, Paul uses *παρουσία* to refer to himself and other men in a non-technical way. Cf. 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6–7; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12.

<sup>142</sup> This cultural influence on NT writers is particularly noted of the technical political meaning of *parousía* as “Imperial Spectacle.” Trevor S. Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008), 225–251; cf. Brent Kinman, “Parousia, Jesus’ “A-Triumphal” Entry, and the Fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:28–44),” *JBL* 118 (1999), 279–294.

<sup>143</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 162, correctly notes, “Two of the clearest methods by which Jesus and the writers of the NT might have distinguished separate phases of His return—differentiation in terminology and contradictoriness in descriptive details—were not employed. Yet we might have expected Jesus and those writers . . . to have distinguished carefully in one or the other manner if not both. On the contrary, the identity of terminology and the harmoniousness of the descriptive details create a presumption in favor of the view which regards the second advent as a single, uninterrupted event.”

<sup>144</sup> The only possible exception found is Toussaint, “Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?” 241–42. Here he briefly discusses the religious use of *parousía* in Jewish apocalyptic texts and by Josephus but only in so far as to show that the Olivet Discourse was directed at the Jews and not the Church. He concludes, “The term *parousia* occurs 24 times in the New testament, but only four times in the Gospels, and *all in Matthew* (vv. 3, 27, 37, 39). This means that the first time the term is used in the New Testament it probably included a Jewish religious sense of the appearance of the Messiah to deliver.”

*parousía* on the basis of lexical evidence.<sup>145</sup> As a result this omission has left pretribulationists without a convincing response to the lexical objection.<sup>146</sup>

#### Ambiguous Use of NT Greek Words

Fourth, pretribulationists ambiguously use NT Greek words. This problem can be seen in all three models; however, it is particularly detrimental for Model 3 since its defining element is that *parousía* refers to the extended complex of events.<sup>147</sup> The most recent example is Craig Blaising's view that *parousía* in Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse changes from being a reference to the complex of events (24:3, 37, 39) to the posttribulational appearing (24:27). In his primary essay he made only passing reference that *parousía* could be used for the visible descent;<sup>148</sup> however, both Hultberg and Moo use this ambiguity to criticize his main argument. Hultberg argues that ". . . there is no good reason to distinguish the parousia that encompasses that day (vv. 37 and 39) from the explicit reference to the parousia in 24:30–31 . . . . The parousia of 24:30–31 is the parousia of 24:36–39."<sup>149</sup> Moo likewise criticizes his double reference, stating,

A shift in the discourse at verse 36 can be granted. But what must be questioned is whether, as Blaising thinks, the shift signals a different focus in the key word *parousía*. Jesus' "coming" is the climax of the first part of the discourse (v. 30). In the second part of the discourse, Jesus then appears to refer back to this "coming" with the noun *parousía* (24:37, 39),

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<sup>145</sup> It should be noted that while both Craig Blaising and Robert Thomas hold to an extended view of *parousía*, neither have argued for pretribulationism from the lexical and cultural significance of that word in any in-depth manner. Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," 25–73; Thomas, "1 & 2 Thessalonians," 30–31, 36, 51–53, 91–93, 100; Thomas, "Imminence in the NT," 191–214.

<sup>146</sup> By contrast, critics employ lexical scholarship to discount the pretribulationist use of these terms. Cf. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 158–59; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 61–70.

<sup>147</sup> As seen in the previous section, those of the first two models admittedly use NT Greek words to refer to either "phase" of the coming of the Lord and thus do not determine the timing of the rapture. For examples see their use of *parousía*, *apokálypsis*, and *epipháneia* in the previous section; cf. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 181, 201; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 155–56.

<sup>148</sup> Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," 54; cf. 38, n. 23 for his note that 24:27 uses *parousía* as the posttribulational descent; cf. Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder," 107.

<sup>149</sup> Hultberg, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture: A Prewrath Response," 83.

the same noun that refers to Jesus' coming in the first part of the discourse (v. 27; cf. v. 3). Yet Blaising argues that the referent of the word changes. But the text does not support such a change.<sup>150</sup>

Blaising retorts that *parousia* in Matthew 24 can have both "broad (more extended) and narrow senses."<sup>151</sup> He continues,

It is already the case in biblical theology that the coming can be thought of in both broad (more extended) and narrow senses. The synoptic parallels indicate that the coming in the second part of the discourse should be viewed in the broader sense. Second, the labor metaphor adds to the conceptuality by providing an image that is immediately recognizable: a baby's "coming" can reference either the entire labor process or the specific appearance at its end. The use of the labor metaphor to cover the entire sequence of the Olivet Discourse prepares the reader for the broader meaning of "coming." When *parousia* is used within the sequence, as it is in Matthew 24:27, it has the narrower meaning—the appearance at the end of the labor process. But *parousia* in 24:36 properly refers to the broader notion of the whole labor, a conclusion confirmed by the synoptic parallels.

Recognizing these two related senses helps resolve the tension between the *parousia* settings of Matthew 24:32–35, a coming with signs, and Matthew 24:36 ff., a coming without signs.<sup>152</sup>

Blaising's conceptual model is plausible but the double meaning of *parousia* ultimately weakens his case. It seems improbable that Matthew would give *parousia* two different meanings, particularly when it appears only four times in the Gospels, all of which occur within the same text.<sup>153</sup> Given that this ambiguity was only highlighted in the responses and rejoinder essays, Blaising was unable to provide the necessary exegetical support of the double reference. If it is true that the meaning of *parousia* can vacillate between the broad and narrow senses, then the interpreter is faced with the

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<sup>150</sup> Moo, "The Pretribulation Rapture Position: A Posttribulation Response," 97.

<sup>151</sup> Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder," 107.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Toussaint, "Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?" 241–42.

problem of determining what it is referencing in each text. Ultimately, it appears to the critic as a fallacy of equivocation.<sup>154</sup>

### Incompleteness of the Models

The last major problem common to all pretribulational models is their lack of a detailed integration of the biblical theme of the coming of the Lord. Unlike those of Models 1 & 2, those of Model 3 have noted that the wrath of God during the Tribulation is due to the coming of the Lord; however, they have not presented, in any extensive amount, that an OT theology of the coming of the LORD corresponds to the NT doctrine.<sup>155</sup> Blaising has correctly argued that the NT day of the Lord/*parousía* complex is in line with the OT coming of God, but his essay focused on developing a canonical day of the Lord theme and not a canonical coming of the Lord theme.<sup>156</sup> To date, no pretribulationist work has integrated current biblical scholarship on the coming of the Lord theme.<sup>157</sup>

The pretribulational models are also incomplete in their lack of significant application of Second Temple Literature (ST) to a pretribulational model of the coming of the Lord.<sup>158</sup> Larry R. Helyer notes that “. . . Jesus and his apostles read the sacred

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<sup>154</sup> Moo, “The Pretribulation Rapture Position: A Posttribulation Response,” 97.

<sup>155</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 49–51, provides a brief discussion of the OT coming of the Lord and day of the Lord interrelationship and its connection to the NT parousia/day of the Lord complex.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27. The exegetical debate over the nature of the day of the Lord was admittedly the primary focus of the entire debate; cf. Hultberg, “Conclusion,” 275.

<sup>157</sup> This scholarship is extensive and includes, but is not limited to: Osvaldo D. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings: The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Literature 27; New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997); Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God At Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans. G. W. Anderson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1954).

<sup>158</sup> Again, the only exception found was Toussaint’s brief discussion of *parousía* in the Second Temple Literature. Toussaint, “Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?” 241–42.

Scriptures of Israel through the lens of Second Temple Judaism.”<sup>159</sup> Assuming Helyer is correct, any model that utilizes OT support, which all three models do, must consider ST influence on the NT. At the very least, a study must be provided that demonstrates that there is no influence. No current pretribulationist work has supplied this study.

This deficiency is true for all rapture views. It likely stems from the common notion that the debate on the timing of the rapture must be decided by investigating the texts that speak directly about that subject.<sup>160</sup> Douglas Moo states, “Any indication that this coming is to be a two-stage event, in which the rapture is separated from the final manifestation, would have to come from passages describing that event.”<sup>161</sup> In principle Moo is correct, but the focus has usually been on NT texts only; however, exegetical investigation of the rapture cannot be limited to the NT even though it is only clearly revealed there. Because the rapture is directly connected to the coming of the Lord, which is a canonical theme, it stands to reason that only by understanding the Lord’s coming as *a canonical theme* can the rapture be fully understood.

### **Conclusion**

Of the three pretribulation models for the nature of the coming of the Lord, only Model 3 provides a suitable foundation to build a proposed model that can answer the two-comings objection. This model views the coming of the Lord as an extended complex of events that is one unified coming. That is, it views a single movement from heaven to earth, though that movement is paused for a number of years while the Lord unleashes

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<sup>159</sup> Larry R. Helyer, “The Necessity, Problems, and Promise of Second Temple Judaism for Discussions of New Testament Eschatology,” *JETS* 47 (2004), 597.

<sup>160</sup> John S. Feinberg, “Arguing About the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How?” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 190–94.

<sup>161</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 201.

the wrath of God upon the earth. Though Model 3 is the best of the three, there remain a number of problems or deficiencies, which were common to all, that must be corrected or revised before it is fully suitable to answer the objection. These problems included ambiguous use of theological and NT Greek terms and phrases, insufficient integration of current lexical research, and a lack of a detailed exegetical and theological integration of the coming of the Lord as a biblical theme. The next two chapters will provide evidence that Model 3's understanding of the nature of the coming of the Lord can be supported from Old Testament, Second Temple Literature, and New Testament data. These two chapters will also attempt to show that key terms and phrases used to denote the coming of the Lord can be clearly integrated into the proposed model. The final chapter will assess the complete model for its ability to provide a reasonable response to the two comings objection based on five of the six elements of that objection laid out in this chapter. The remaining element, the historical objection, will need to be answered in a separate study.

CHAPTER 2  
THE COMING OF THE LORD (YAHWEH) THEME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT  
AND SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

In chapter one it was argued that the current rapture debate has lacked a detailed exegetical and theological integration of the coming of the Lord as a biblical theme. It was further noted that a reasonable case can be made that the Old Testament (OT) and Second Temple Literature (ST) support Model 3's understanding of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The new model proposed beginning in this chapter will take the basic elements of Model 3 and attempt to fill in the gaps that were identified in chapter one. This proposed model views the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as an extended, unified, complex of events that fulfills the OT coming of the LORD<sup>1</sup> theme. Lexical and exegetical evidence from the OT and ST will be provided to clarify and develop this model.

The thesis of this dissertation is grounded on the view that the coming of the Lord is a biblical theme that spans both the OT and NT; otherwise, an examination outside the NT would be pointless. Against this view stands the equivocal and somewhat inconsistent treatment of this theme in scholarship. As stated in chapter one, the OT coming of the LORD is a theme that is rarely, if ever, included in modern eschatological debates.<sup>2</sup> Often,

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. Yahweh or God. When "LORD" is used, the meaning is Yahweh. Other equivalent expressions found in quotations herein include: YHWH; JHWH; Jehovah, or the Hebrew, יהוה. When "Lord" is used, the reference is either to the canonical (OT and NT) coming of the Lord theme as opposed to the OT and ST coming of Yahweh, or God, theme.

<sup>2</sup> Outside of the rapture debate, there are other scholars who discuss the OT coming of the LORD theme as a central element in eschatology and theology as a whole. For example, see: Osvaldo D. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings: The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Literature 27; New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Jürgen Moltmann, *The*

emphasis is placed on the day of the Lord (DL) as the principal and controlling eschatological concept.<sup>3</sup> While some notable resources omit “the coming of the LORD” as a distinct theme,<sup>4</sup> the coming of the LORD is regarded by many biblical scholars as one of the most important themes in OT and ST eschatology.<sup>5</sup> Some have even noted that the OT coming of the LORD was a fundamental presupposition that served as the background to the NT *parousia* of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> Because of its importance, the principal elements of the doctrine of the coming of the LORD have already been examined individually by scholars, including a lexical and thematic analysis of the coming of the LORD, the Glory-Spirit-Presence of the LORD, revelation, theophany, judgment and wrath, salvation, and the day of the LORD.<sup>7</sup> These studies focus on elements of the coming of the LORD theme;

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*Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (trans. M. Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans. G. W. Anderson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1954).

<sup>3</sup> The 2010 Rapture debate focused on the meaning and extent of day of the Lord as determinative of the time of the rapture. Cf. Alan Hultberg, “Conclusion,” in *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (ed. Stanley N. Gundry; 2d ed.; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 275.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Stephen L. Cook, “Eschatology of the OT,” *NIDB* 2:299, provides a section for “The Day of Yahweh; The Latter Days,” but fails to discuss the coming of Yahweh.

<sup>5</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 59; George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 10; E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *IDB* 2:127; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Baker; 2 vols.; The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 1:499. See also Albrecht Oepke, “παρουσία, πάρεμι,” *TDNT* 5:859–71.

<sup>6</sup> After an extensive survey of the OT coming of God and a brief survey of NT usage, Oepke, *TDNT* 5:866, writes, “These data leave us in no doubt as to the historical place of the technical use of *παρουσία* in the NT. The term is Hellenistic. In essential content, however, it derives from the OT, Judaism, and primitive Christian thinking;” Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 59, writes, “Among the many symbolic representations in the Hebrew Bible that were available to the early Christians in their elaboration of the *parousia* of Jesus Christ, the idea of the coming of God, or of his representative, to the people was beyond any doubt one of the most compelling.” Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> For each of the major elements, the most notable include (some sources overlap with various elements): 1) Lexical and thematic analysis: Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*; 2) Glory-Spirit-Presence: Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: The Heart of Biblical Theology* (Religious Perspectives 26; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:15–45; 3) Revelation: Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double Day, 1983), 228–45; John K. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967); 4) Theophany: Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God At Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*; Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament*

however, no one has integrated them in order to determine how the OT theme shapes a NT understanding of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Given the inconsistent treatment of this theme it is not surprising that it has failed to weigh significantly on the rapture debate. Often it is discussed under other doctrines, such as the day of the LORD; however, this treatment seems to have caused the current tendency to not connect the OT coming of the LORD to the NT coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As will become clear as the chapter progresses, the coming of the LORD is one theme within a complex motif that also includes the themes of the revelation of the LORD, the sovereignty of the LORD, and the day of the LORD. The following sections will provide a lexical and exegetical examination of each of these to demonstrate how they interrelate. This study will also attempt to demonstrate that the coming of the LORD, when taken together with the other themes, is reasonably understood to be an extended unified complex of events. Finally, Second Temple Literature (ST) will be surveyed to see whether a significant development occurred during the time between the OT and NT that could have changed how NT writers understood the coming of the Lord motif as herein proposed. Because ST is a period of transition between the OT and NT, some ST

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(Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965); 5) Judgment and Wrath: Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 27; ed. J. Crenshaw; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 52 (1955), 1–42; 6) Salvation & Revelation: Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Eerdmans, 1948; repr. Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000); 7) The Day of the Lord: Everson, "The Day of Yahweh as Historical Event: A Study of the Historical and Theological Purposes for the Employment of the Concept in the Classical Prophets of the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1969); Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'—Reconsidered," *Hebrew University CA* 37 (1966): 29–72; Gerhard Von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," *JSS* 4 (1959): 97–108; Craig A. Blasing, "The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology," *BSac* 169 (2012): 3–19; "The Day of the Lord and the Seventieth Week of Daniel," *BSac* 169 (2012): 131–42; "The Day of the Lord and the Rapture," *BSac* 169 (2012): 259–70; "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18," *BSac* 169 (2012): 387–401.

material will naturally be dealt with in the NT. Potential objections will be responded to throughout as necessary.

### **Part 1—The Coming of the LORD: Immanent Divine Action**

This section will present reasonable evidence for the following: 1) when the OT speaks of the coming of the LORD it is referring to the LORD’s direct intervention in history; 2) the coming of the LORD is lexically and exegetically presented as the immanent presence of the LORD in a particular time and place, which could aptly be entitled the “presence-coming of the LORD;” 3) the presence-coming of the LORD is portrayed through theophanic imagery, which could, depending upon the text, refer to the occurrence of actual theophanic manifestations in history or to literary device; 4) the appearance of theophanic imagery indicates that the historical actions associated with that imagery are sovereignly caused by the LORD when He directly intervenes in history.

#### **Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Coming of the LORD**

There are no Hebrew words for abstract conceptions such as “presence” or “coming.”<sup>8</sup>

Instead, the verbs “to be [present]” (הָיָא *hāyā*) and “to come” (בֹּא *bōʾ*) are used when

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<sup>8</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861, further writes, “These all have a predominantly secular sense, though they can sometimes have a numinous echo. The word of the seer comes (1 Sam 9:6), the time (appointed by God) is present, the end is near (Lam 4:18), evil comes (Prov 1:27), the day of recompense (Deut 32:35) or of Yahweh (Joel 2:1) comes, and the year of redemption will also come (Isa 63:4). In particular God is everywhere present (Ps 139:8); He is there when His people cry to Him (Isa 58:9). The OT saint can also experience the coming of God . . .” cf. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 22; Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (trans. J. L. Moreau. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), 28; James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford University Press, 1961), 58–72, who is in opposition to Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, 38–49, concerning the “dynamic” versus “existential” character of הָיָא (*hāyā*), “to be, become, exist, happen.” The foundational disagreement between Boman and Barr is Boman’s thesis (p. 17) that a language’s grammatical constructs restrict the thinking processes of those who use it. Thus arises Boman’s conclusion that the Hebrew language with its expressions principally given by active verbs of movement indicate that Hebrews thought in “dynamic variety” while the Greek language with its heavy use of nominal and abstract words reflects “static” thinking. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 44–45, agrees with Barr’s rejection of Boman’s thesis and labels this the fallacy of linking language and mentality.

the Hebrews wished to convey these ideas.<sup>9</sup> “To come” (בֹּא *bôʾ*) will be examined first. While בֹּא normally speaks of spatial movement, it also appears frequently with metaphorical meaning.<sup>10</sup> For example, it can be used in euphemistic language, such as in Genesis 15:15, “to go to the fathers,” i.e., “to die.”<sup>11</sup> Also, “those who ‘enter’ the city gate are probably those who have a voice in the affairs of the community.”<sup>12</sup> When used with the prepositional phrase “in the days” it connotes advanced age. The idiomatic phrase “enters into the days” would equate in English to “advanced in years.”<sup>13</sup> בֹּא also appears in temporal expressions, such as in Isaiah 39:6, “Behold, the days are coming . . .”<sup>14</sup> It can also be used in reference to announce events that “arrive” or “come to pass”<sup>15</sup> as well as “the coming events.”<sup>16</sup>

Theologically, the most important use of בֹּא is for the coming of God.<sup>17</sup> For corporeal beings, coming to and arrival at a particular location implies the individual’s presence in that location. By contrast, because God is present everywhere,<sup>18</sup> traditional western thinking, descending from Hellenistic thought, would seem to preclude referencing any literal movement of God. Henry A. Virkler writes,

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<sup>9</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861; E. Jenni, “בֹּא *bôʾ* to come,” *TLOT* 1:201, notes that *bôʾ* is the fourth most frequent verb in the OT. The first three are *ʾmr* “to say,” *hyh* “to be,” and *ʿsh* “to do, make.” It is, therefore, the most frequent verb of movement; Cf. E. A. Martens, “בֹּא (*bôʾ*) go in, enter,” *TWOT* 93–5; Bill T. Arnold, “בֹּא,” *NIDOTTE* 1:615–18.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:615, notes that “numerous metaphorical meanings are possible.”

<sup>11</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:202 notes that it frequently occurs in the meaning “to go in to a woman,” i.e., “to live together.” Cf. Gen 6:4; 16:2, 4; 19:31; 29:21, 23, 30; Deut 21:13; 22:13; 25:5; Judg 16:1; 2 Sam 3:7, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:615; cf. Gen 23:10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Cf. 1 Sam 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17 = Isa 39:6; Jer 7:32; 9:24; 16:14; etc.; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13.

<sup>15</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:203; Cf. Deut 13:2 [H 13:3]; 18:22; 28:2, 15, 45; 30:1; Josh 21:45; 23:14f.; Judg 9:57; 13:12, 17; 1 Sam 9:6; Isa 5:19; 42:9; 48:3, 5; Jer 17:15; 28:9; Hab 2:3; Ps 105:19; Prov 26:2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. Isa 41:22, *habbāʾôt* “the coming events;” Isa 41:23; 44:7, *hāʾōtīyôt* “to come.”

<sup>17</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:203.

<sup>18</sup> Ps 139:7, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Cf. Jer 23:23–25.

When referring to God (excepting Christ in His earthly state) the concept of coming and going does not refer to movement from one physical location to another, because God as a spiritual Being is omnipresent. . . . both the biblical and logical evidence regarding God’s existence as a spiritual Being (a Being for whom time and space parameters do not mean the same thing they mean for us), indicate that the concept of God’s coming and going does not refer to His movement from one location to another. Rather, “coming” as applied to God often refers to God’s manifestation of Himself in some special way.<sup>19</sup>

Scripture, however, readily uses **בָּא** in reference to God.<sup>20</sup> E. Jenni notes that approximately forty OT passages distinctly refer to “a coming” (**בָּא**) of Yahweh.<sup>21</sup>

The idea of the “coming of God” is so pervasive, in fact, that it appears in every biblical category of God’s interaction with humans and His creation.<sup>22</sup> The coming of God is essentially a statement identifying His direct, personal, intervention in history within a specific period of time and location. Bill T. Arnold notes that **בָּא** “is especially significant where it describes God’s entrance into space and time (his creation).”<sup>23</sup> The coming of the LORD is thus the principal idea scripture uses to express God’s immanence in His creation versus His transcendence.<sup>24</sup> After his survey of passages referencing the

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<sup>19</sup> Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 149; cf. *ibid.*, 150–51, provides an illustration of John 20:22 and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as a special manifestation of His presence.

<sup>20</sup> Once the less frequent **הִתְבָּא** (appearing only twenty times in the OT) is used in reference to the coming of God and in parallel construction with **בָּא** (Deut 33:2). Cf. Victor P. Hamilton, “**הִתְבָּא** (*‘ātā*) to come,” *TWOT* 84.

<sup>21</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:201–4.

<sup>22</sup> Scholars have categorized these texts in various ways based on both biblical and theological criteria: Jenni, *TLOT* 1:203, categorizes these into “the coming of God in revelation in the old narratives, the coming conditioned by the cult or temple, the hymnic or prophetic-eschatological descriptions of theophany.” Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 59, expands this classification, including a fourth category for “the historic coming of God to his people to save and/or judge.” Elmer A. Martens, “**בָּא** (*bô*) go in, enter,” *TWOT* 93–5, somewhat distinctly, argues for four theological uses of the verb “to come” (**בָּא** *bô*), three of which have reference to the LORD or His representative: 1) the coming of the LORD to his people; 2) “coming” in reference to the promise-fulfillment motif; 3) the coming of the Messiah who brings salvation; and, 4) the coming of the man “to the sanctuary with his community to pray and offer sacrifices.” Cf. Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:615–18; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 3–10.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:616.

<sup>24</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 100, writes, “These different ways of referring to God’s presence are really different rereadings of the fundamental theological principle of God’s coming. The language being used is, of course, religious and therefore highly symbolic and metaphorical. This means

coming of God, Jenni concludes, “these passages all share the fact that in them *bō*<sup>3</sup> testifies to the God who intervenes in history.”<sup>25</sup>

More precisely, **בוא** indicates God’s presence intervening in a specific time and location.<sup>26</sup> When the LORD “comes” He is “present,” which is expressed by His direct intervention in history.<sup>27</sup> Vena notes, “The parousia of God is equivalent to the being of God: God is a God who comes. This seems to be the ‘definition’ of the name Yahweh, as we find it in Exod 3:14: **אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה**. The **היה** needs to be understood in the sense of ‘being present,’ ‘being there.’”<sup>28</sup> The context in which the LORD stated His name was immediately after He had descended to “see” the conditions that His people were in, to redeem His people with mighty acts and to enter into a covenant with them (cf. Exod 2:23–25; 3:2, 7–8). Vena writes, “The coming of God is synonymous with active presence and as such is unavoidable.”<sup>29</sup> When scripture presents the coming of the LORD it always describes this coming with arrival of His personal presence to directly intervene in the course of history, which is in distinction from His transcendent presence sovereignly guiding and upholding all of creation.

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that it is an analogical language that attempts to interpret the reality of the ‘God who comes’ through symbolic representations. These representations should not be confused with the reality itself, but rather should be seen as pointers of this unspeakable, unavoidable reality.”

<sup>25</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:204; cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861, has a section dedicated to the OT coming of God in history: “The Song of Deborah extols the victory over Sisera as a theophany, Jud 5:4 f. The coming of Yahweh means victory over the enemies of Israel (Egypt, Isa 19:1; Assyria, Isa 30:27; the nations, Hab 3:3 ff., 13). For His apostate and disobedient people, too, esp. its rebellious members, His coming is terrible, His anger fearful (Am. 5:18–20; Zeph. 1:15–18; 2:2; 2 S. 24:15 f.; Jer 23:19, 30 ff.; Mal 3:5). To the fore, however, is His appearing to bring freedom from tyranny (Exod 3:8; Ps 80:2), to conclude the covenant (Exod 19:18, 20). The liberation from exile is regarded as almost an exact equivalent of the redemption out of Egypt, Isa 35:2, 4; 40:3 ff., 10; 59:20; 60:1; 62:11. The coming age of salvation leads to the eschaton.”

<sup>26</sup> The “coming of the LORD” is equated with the “presence of the LORD” and His direct intervention in history by a wide range of biblical scholars including: Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 59–74; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 20–21; Jenni, *TLOT* 1:204; Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:616.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 3–10.

<sup>28</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 99.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

It could be objected that God is present everywhere and language expressing his coming and action in the world merely reinforces His continuous providential power. Fretheim writes, “God is not simply ‘here and there,’ God is always lovingly present, in every divine act, whether of judgment or salvation. Hence, God’s presence is not a static or passive presence; it is a presence in relationship. . . .”<sup>30</sup> Later he writes, “The extraordinariness is not understood in terms of divine intervention nor intrusion, as if God were normally not present and then intervenes at certain moments to make things happen. God is present on every occasion and active in every event.”<sup>31</sup> This objection serves to clarify the point being presented. The OT understands and affirms the LORD’s omnipresence and His providential direction of history (Ps 139:7–8; Jer 23:24); however, it also recognizes that He intervened in history in specialized moments and portrayed those interventions as manifestations of His presence (Exod 14:13–31; 19:9–20). Even Fretheim admits, “No full account of any events is possible without factoring God into the process. . . . At the same time, God’s special presence is associated with certain times and places (e.g., tabernacle, Exod 40:34–38) and the chosen people (Exod 29:45–46).”<sup>32</sup> Thus the LORD’s immanent presence is thus distinguished from His transcendent omnipresence just as His distinct moments of direct action in history can be distinguished from His continuous providential care of all creation.<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Presence-Coming of the LORD and His Direct Historical Intervention***

Other Hebrew verbs also convey the LORD’s immanence in history. The most important

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<sup>30</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, “God, OT View of,” *NIDB* 2:611.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:613.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:611.

<sup>33</sup> Note that the NT likewise recognizes that at all times Christ “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3) while this exercise of His transcendent omnipresence and omnipotence is maintained to be conceptually distinct from His *parousía* which is still future (1 Cor 15:23).

of these words include “to descend/to come down” (יָרַד *yrd*),<sup>34</sup> “to ascend/go up/depart” (עָלָה *lh*),<sup>35</sup> “to go out/go forth” (יָצָא *yāšā*),<sup>36</sup> “to visit/visitation” (פָּקַד / פְּקֻדָּה *pāqad / p<sup>e</sup>quddā*),<sup>37</sup> “to see, look at, inspect/to appear” (רָאָה *rāʾā*),<sup>38</sup> and “come near, approach” (קָרַב *qārab*).<sup>39</sup> Because Scripture connects the idea of the LORD’s immanence or active presence in historical intervention using action verbs, usually depicting or implying movement, the most prevalent of which is the notion of His “coming,” this language could aptly be described as the language of the presence-coming of the LORD. This language is found in texts where the LORD intervenes in history to 1) reveal knowledge, i.e., give revelation; 2) create or manage a covenant; 3) judge; 4) save; and, 5) to intervene on the eschatological day of the LORD.<sup>40</sup> A brief survey will demonstrate that each is linguistically and conceptually linked to the coming of the LORD.

First, the language of presence-coming is used when the LORD directly acts to reveal knowledge, particularly concerning His nature and character. God comes through dreams to reveal Himself.<sup>41</sup> God “came” (בּוֹא) to Abimelech in a dream of the night to reveal that Sarah was Abraham’s wife (Gen 20:3–7). Likewise, the LORD came to Laban “in a dream of the night” to caution him not to harm Jacob (Gen 31:24). The LORD came (בּוֹא) to Balaam forbidding him from going with the leaders of Moab to curse Israel (Num

<sup>34</sup> Cf. G. Wehmeier, “עָלָה, to go up,” *TLOT* 2:891–92; Eugene H. Merrill, “יָרַד,” *NIDOTTE* 2:534–35.

<sup>35</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:883–5.

<sup>36</sup> Paul R. Gilchrist, “(יָצָא) go out, come out, go forth,” *TWOT* 393–94.

<sup>37</sup> W. Schottroff, “פָּקַד *pqd* to visit,” *TLOT* 2:1018–31; Victor P. Hamilton, “פָּקַד (*pāqad*) number, reckon, visit, punish, appoint,” *TWOT* 731–33; Tyler F. Williams, “פָּקַד (*pqd*),” *NIDOTTE* 3:657–63.

<sup>38</sup> Robert D. Culver, “רָאָה (*rāʾā*) see, look at, inspect,” *TWOT* 823–25.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, “קָרַב (*qārab*) come near, approach,” *TWOT* 811–13.

<sup>40</sup> Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:611–18 provides a similar survey relating these as divine action in history instead of the coming of God.

<sup>41</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

22:8–12, 20). Soon after, the LORD “met” (קָרָה)<sup>42</sup> Balaam on several occasions (Num 23:4, 16). As a result of the meeting the LORD “put a word in Balaam’s mouth” (Num 23:5, 16). Each time Israel was blessed (Num 23:5–10; 18–24), the latter of which revealed an aspect of the divine nature (v. 19).<sup>43</sup> In the very act of His coming and descent, the LORD reveals Himself. Eugene H. Merrill writes,

Yahweh’s descent among his people, an act that is revelatory both of his immanence and, ironically, of his glory, is usually expressed by *yrd* in the q. As a God who has interest in the world and its activities, he ‘came down’ to witness the construction of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:5). This highly anthropomorphic imagery stresses the vital connection between God and his creation. In an even more explicit way, this time with saving intentions, Yahweh is said to ‘have come down to rescue [Israel] from the hand of the Egyptians’ (Exod 3:8). Later he ‘came down in the cloud’ to speak to Moses and to put his Spirit upon the 70 elders (Num 11:25).<sup>44</sup>

Second, the language of presence-coming occurs when the LORD acts to establish or manage a covenant.<sup>45</sup> The LORD “appeared” (רָאָה) to Abram in Genesis 17:1 in order to make an everlasting covenant with him (v. 7). Later, when the LORD had “finished talking with him,” He “went up (עָלָה) from Abraham” (v. 22). The LORD came down (יָרַד, Exod 3:8) to deliver Israel from bondage because their cry rose up” (עָלָה, 2:23) to God and He “remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (2:24). The LORD “came down,” or “descended” (יָרַד, *yrd*) upon Mount Sinai to establish the covenant with Israel (Exod 19:11).<sup>46</sup> Martens writes, “At the founding of Israel as a nation he came in thick clouds to Mount Sinai (Exod 19:9; 20:20). At Sinai the LORD

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<sup>42</sup> קָרָה, “Encounter, meet, befall,” *BDB* 899.

<sup>43</sup> Num 23:19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

<sup>44</sup> Merrill, *NIDOTTE* 2:534.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*; Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>46</sup> Merrill, *NIDOTTE* 2:534, writes, “The most intense collocation of such theophanic appearances occurs in connection with the making of covenant at Sinai, where Yahweh entered into a sovereign-vassal

“entered (בּוֹא) into a covenant” with Israel (Ezek 16:8). From Sinai he came (בּוֹא) with his ten thousands to fight for his people (Deut 33:2–5; Hab 3:3).”<sup>47</sup> Several other examples could also be listed.<sup>48</sup>

Third, the language of presence-coming occurs when the LORD judges. The biblical doctrine of judgment is itself a complex motif, which will be discussed further later. Suffice it to say that the biblical concept of judgment reflects the ancient eastern view, which includes all activities of government.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the coming of the LORD to judge refers to the process by which the LORD tests, examines, renders a verdict, pronounces a sentence, and executes wrath.<sup>50</sup> Reflecting this complexity a number of words are used to express this theme. First, בּוֹא is used when the LORD comes to judge: “May our God come (בּוֹא) . . . . For God Himself is Judge” (Ps 50:3, 6).<sup>51</sup> The expression, “to enter (בּוֹא, lit. “to come”<sup>52</sup>) into judgment with” is often used when the LORD comes to judge, particularly within the covenantal lawsuit genre.<sup>53</sup> For example,

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relationship with his chosen people Israel. It is significant that *yrd* is the vb. used throughout the narrative in Exodus of Yahweh’s manifestation at the mountain.”

<sup>47</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>48</sup> For sake of brevity, the coming of the LORD to Adam and Noah to establish or vindicate a covenant is omitted here; however, close scrutiny of these texts will reveal a similar motif of the coming of the LORD to establish a covenant in respect to those OT figures as well. Cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 142–71.

<sup>49</sup> Robert D. Culver, “שָׁפַט (*shāpaṭ*) judge, govern,” *TWOT* 947, writes, “The primary sense of *shāpaṭ* is to exercise the processes of government. Since, however, the ancients did not always divide the functions of government, as most modern governments do, between legislative, executive, and judicial functions (and departments) the common translation, “to judge,” misleads us. For, the word, judge, as *shāpaṭ* is usually translated, in modern English, means to exercise only the judicial function of government.”

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94; Cf. Mal 3:1.

<sup>52</sup> The LXX translates Isa 3:14, “αὐτὸς κύριος εἰς κρίσιν ἤξει μετὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων αὐτοῦ.”

<sup>53</sup> For an excellent and illuminating discussion of the biblical covenant lawsuit genre with respect to the coming of the LORD, Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 125–41; cf. Daniel I. Block, “God and Magog in Ezekiel’s Eschatological Vision,” in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (eds. K. E. Brower & M. W. Elliott; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 85–116.

Isaiah 3:13–14 states, “The LORD arises (נָצַב<sup>54</sup>) to contend (רִיב<sup>55</sup>), and stands (עָמַד<sup>56</sup>) to judge (דָּיַן<sup>57</sup>) the people.<sup>58</sup> The LORD enters (בּוֹא) into judgment<sup>59</sup> with the elders and princes of His people.”<sup>60</sup> Judgment is also implied when the LORD looks upon (רָאָה *rā·ā*) a person or people: “May the LORD look upon (רָאָה *rā·ā*) you and judge you” (Exod 5:21).

The verb “to visit/visitation” (פָּקַד *pāqad*/פָּקַד *pqd*/פָּקַדְהָ *p<sup>e</sup>quddā*) is also frequently used to portray the presence-coming of the LORD.<sup>61</sup> The word carries a wide semantic range, which “has long perplexed scholars.”<sup>62</sup> That being said, it constitutes one of the most important words denoting the LORD’s presence-coming and direct intervention.<sup>63</sup> Schottroff notes that the abstract form of “visitation” (פָּקַדְהָ) has “the sense of official inspection(s) carried out in one’s own jurisdiction that holds those concerned responsible for negligence and errors and intervenes against them.”<sup>64</sup> He further notes that the obvious or plain meaning of the verb form “to visit” (פָּקַד), which is “‘to seek out, visit, see to someone/something’ seems to underlie the meaning ‘to see

<sup>54</sup> נָצַב, “Take one’s stand, stand,” *BDB* 662.

<sup>55</sup> רִיב, “Strive, contend,” *BDB* 936.

<sup>56</sup> עָמַד, “Take one’s stand, stand” *BDB* 763. Note: The notion of “standing” is repeatedly used in both the OT and NT in judicial imagery of an individual’s ability to stand before a righteous Judge. Those who are righteous can “stand” before the LORD, whereas the unrighteous cannot “stand.” It has direct application to the NT coming of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ on His day (cf. Luke 21:36).

<sup>57</sup> דָּיַן, “Judge,” *BDB* 192.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Isa 66:16; Hos 4:1; Mic 6:2; Ps 50:3–6;

<sup>59</sup> Job 22:4; Ps 143:2; Ezek 20:35, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:201–4, writes, “Isa 3:14 (*bō<sup>3</sup> b<sup>e</sup>mišpāṭ<sup>c</sup>im*, “to enter judgment with”; cf. Ps 143:2; Job 9:32; 22:4; H. J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im AT* [1964], 85) and Isa 50:2 (“why have I come and no one is here?; cf. Isa 41:28) do not concern coming in the full sense of theophany, but involve *bō<sup>3</sup>* in a fixed legal expression; cf. *ṯh* in Dan 7:22.”

<sup>61</sup> Williams, *NIDOTTE* 3:657–63; Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1018–31; Hamilton, *TWOT* 731–33.

<sup>62</sup> For example, Williams, *NIDOTTE* 3:657, lists the following as the range of meaning of פָּקַד just in q.: “attend to, take note of, care for, punish, muster, assemble, record, enroll, commit, appoint, call to account, avenge.”

<sup>63</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 63, notes that פָּקַד *pqd* is “one of the main verbs used to express the coming of God.”

<sup>64</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1019.

attentively or in an examining manner to someone/something”<sup>65</sup> Hamilton says that the most common use of פִּקְדָה “is to express the primary idea of that verb—intervention by a superior power (usually God or a king) in order to make a great change in the situation of a subordinate,” and it “more generally represents an active intervention to help or injure the one visited.”<sup>66</sup>

Like בּוֹא, פִּקְדָה often functions as the initiating action and is used in conjunction with other verbs.<sup>67</sup> These texts can portray the LORD visiting in a positive or negative light.<sup>68</sup> For positive, פִּקְדָה is used when the LORD “visits” for 1) liberation (Exod 3:16; 4:31; 13:19; Gen 50:24–25; Jer 27:22; Zeph 2:7; Zech 10:3), 2) child-bearing (Gen 21:1; 1 Sam 2:21), 3) the fertility of the land of Israel (Ps 65:9) and, 4) goodness and blessing for humanity (Ps 8:5[4]; Job 7:17–18; Jer 15:15).<sup>69</sup> In Gen 50:24, פִּקְדָה is used of God who would come to Israel in Egypt to bring the nation into the promised land.<sup>70</sup> In this sense the verb פִּקְדָה (*pāqad*) overlaps the semantic range of “remember, pay attention to.”<sup>71</sup> In this sense it refers to “Yahweh’s beneficial attention to individuals or to the people Israel in the sense of ‘to see to attentively, regard or look upon, see after someone.’”<sup>72</sup> Schottroff notes, “In exilic/post-exilic prophecy, . . . *pqd* in this usage indicates the imminent act of Yahweh’s renewed attention to Israel, an act that will

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 2:1021. Cf. 1 Sam 14:17; 20:6; 2 Sam 3:8; 2 Kgs 9:34; Isa 27:3.

<sup>66</sup> Hamilton, *TWOT* 732.

<sup>67</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1021, notes, “*pqd* parallels first *yāʿ* ‘to perceive, take notice of’ (Job 35:15), *nbī* hi. ‘to regard, look at’ (Ps 80:14[H 15]); then *bh̄n* ‘to examine, put to the test’ (Ps 17:3; Job 7:18), *glh* pi. ‘to uncover’ (Lam 4:22), and *šrp* ‘to test (by fire)’ (Ps 17:3); and finally *bqš* pi. ‘to seek, locate’ (Zech 11:16), *hps̄* pi. ‘to seek (thoroughly)’ (Zeph 1:12).”

<sup>68</sup> Hamilton, *TWOT* 731–32.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 63.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Williams, *NIDOTTE* 3:661.

<sup>71</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1025.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 2:1024.

initiate the return of the exiles or the Diaspora.”<sup>73</sup> For negative, פקד is used synonymously with “to punish/punishment.”<sup>74</sup> The LORD “visits” for judgment upon 1) enemies of Israel (Num 14:18; Deut 5:6) and 2) disobedient Israel (Jer 44:13).<sup>75</sup> Hamilton notes, “When translated ‘visit,’ . . . this word almost always . . . points to action that produces a great change in the position of a subordinate either for good or ill.”<sup>76</sup> Noting the coming of the LORD for both positive and negative aspects, Arnold states, “God’s arrival is frequently a gracious event, though sometimes judgment is in order.”<sup>77</sup>

More important theologically, פקד carries the meaning of examination. Schottroff notes, “Much more widely dispersed in OT theological language is the use of *pqd* “to visit” in the sense of Yahweh’s coming to examine and to call to accountability and responsibility for transgressions and omissions.”<sup>78</sup> In this sense, the semantic range of “visit” overlaps the idea of testing.<sup>79</sup> “Visit” can therefore mean “assessment.” Schottroff speaks about the “investigative visitation” by Yahweh.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Cf. Jer 29:10; Zech 10:3b; Zeph 2:7 par. to *šûb šēbû* “to alter fate.”

<sup>74</sup> Exod 32:34, “in the day when I punish (lit. “visit”), I will punish (“visit”) them for their sin.” Cf. Jer 44:13; Hamilton, *TWOT* 732.

<sup>75</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> Hamilton, *TWOT* 731. Of punishment: Hos 9:7; Isa 10:3; Mic 7:4; Num 16:29; Jer 8:12; 10:15. Of gracious providence: Job 10:12; cf. פקד, “oversight, mustering, visitation, store,” *BDB*, 824.

“Visitation” in reference to God can either be for punishment (Exod 32:34) or for salvation and remission of sin: Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44; 1 Pet 2:12.

<sup>77</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:616 further writes, “Thus, Isaiah sees God coming in judgment (Isa 3:14; 30:27), as does the psalmist (Ps 50:3–4; 98:9). It is in this context that one should interpret the prophetic emphasis on the coming of “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (See the following passages where *bw* is used with the Day of Yahweh: Joel 2:31[3:4]; see also Isa 13:9; Zech 14:1, Mal 4:5[3:23]). The “two-place Hiphil” is used occasionally with Yahweh as subject when he brings evil upon people (1 Kgs 9:9), or when Jeremiah says Yahweh brings evil from the north (Jer 4:6).”

<sup>78</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1025, continues, “In this usage, passages that employ the verb abs. (Exod 32:34; Isa 26:14; Job 31:14; 35:15; pass.: ni. Isa 24:22; 29:6; Prov 19:23) or construct it with the per. Acc. (Jer 6:15; 49:8; 50:31; Pss 17:3; 59:6; Job 7:18) give more prominence to the aspects of examination and discovery of (hidden) transgressions.”

<sup>79</sup> Marvin R. Wilson, “הנסָ (nāsā) test, try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof, put to the test,” *TWOT* 581; (Ps 17:3; Job 7:18). Cf. Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1021.

<sup>80</sup> Zeph 1:12. Cf. Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1021.

Closely related to the idea of coming in judgment-assessment is the LORD's coming to test (נָסָא *nāsâ*)<sup>81</sup> or purify (שָׂרַפַּת *šārap*).<sup>82</sup> The LORD's coming to test can be revelatory as in Exod 20:20.<sup>83</sup> This testing is an act of grace so that Israel would know, i.e. experience, the God who they are entering into covenant with.<sup>84</sup> When He comes to test, He is immanently present, which is verified by two points. First, theophanic language is prominent at this foundational coming to test, which sets the precedence for all other events of divine testing. Note the context in Exod 20:18–22:

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*. Then the LORD said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.”

This “test” provided experiential knowledge of the LORD whereby they would fear the LORD, thus keeping them from sin. Second, the LORD is immanently present because the people could test the LORD just as He tests them for He dwelt in the midst of the people (Exod 17:1–7; cf. Num 14:22; Deut 6:15–17).<sup>85</sup>

The coming of the LORD to test can also be purifying and refining in order to purge sin from individuals. Marvin R. Wilson writes,

In most contexts *nāsâ* has the idea of testing or proving the quality of someone or something, often through adversity or hardship. . . . The

<sup>81</sup> Wilson, *TWOT* 581.

<sup>82</sup> John E. Hartley, “שָׂרַפַּת (*šārap*) smelt, refine, test,” *TWOT* 777–78.

<sup>83</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:616.

<sup>84</sup> For an excellent discussion of the idea of “testing” as providing experiential knowledge to the people see Moshe Greenberg, “נָסָא in Exodus 20:20 and the Purpose of the Sinaitic Theophany,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 273–76.

<sup>85</sup> For the LORD getting experiential knowledge see Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2, 16; 13:3; Judg 2:22; 3:1, 4.

largest number of references, however, deal with situations where a person or a nation is undergoing a trial or difficult time brought about by another. . . . false prophets sometimes were the instrument for testing a man's faith (Deut 13:3[H 4]). Often, however, God is the One responsible for bringing testings and trials upon man. God delivered Israel by sending "great trials" upon the Egyptians (Deut 7:19; 23:3[H 2]); but he later tested Israel by the Canaanite nations (Judg 2:22; 3:1, 4). Likewise, *nāsā* is used when God tested both Abraham (Gen 22:1) and Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:31). Such testing by God, however, was not without intent. It was to refine the character of man that he might walk more closely in God's ways (Exod 16:4; Deut 8:2; Judg 2:22; 2 Chr 32:31; Ps 26:1–3).<sup>86</sup>

In Deut 8:5, the LORD said He was testing Israel in the wilderness for forty years, which was to be understood as Him disciplining them "just as a man disciplines His son."

The coming of the LORD to test can also be judgmental, and ultimately, wrathful.

Hartley notes,

Various aspects of the refining process are vividly used for judgment on and purification from sin; e.g. a blazing furnace, bellows, lead, dross, refuse silver (e.g. Isa 1:25; Jer 6:27–30; Ezek 22:18–22). God seeks to remove from his people all wickedness and sin so that they can endure his holy presence. . . . Further, when his people are wayward and violate the covenant, God seeks to bring them back by refining them (Jer 9:7 [H 6]). God tries them in the furnace of affliction (Isa 48:10). Although they have to endure difficult circumstances, as long as their faith in him remains firm, they will eventually experience deliverance (Ps 66:6–12).<sup>87</sup>

The coming of the LORD to test is ultimately for the purpose of removing wicked individuals from among His people for the purpose of covenantal fellowship. Hartley continues, "sometimes the people become so obstinate that no matter how intense the refining fire becomes, it is in vain (Jer 6:27–30). Then God must come against his people in judgment. . . . Those who undergo the judgment as a refining shall turn to God and enter into covenant with him once again (Zech 13:9)."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Wilson, *TWOT* 581.

<sup>87</sup> Hartley, *TWOT* 778.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

Fourth, the language of presence-coming is used when the LORD acts to save, redeem, or intercede for His people. Martens notes, “God’s coming to save is essentially an intervention.”<sup>89</sup> Jenni writes, writes, “Salvation, which basically again consists of the coming of Yahweh (Isa 40:9–10), is expressed in very diverse ways and with the aid of the most varied concepts and traditions.”<sup>90</sup> For example, Jenni notes that in Deut 4:34 בּוֹא “serves as only the basis for the following verb:” “Or has a god tried (נִסָּה) to go (בּוֹא) to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials (מַסָּה *massâh*),<sup>91</sup> by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?”<sup>92</sup> In this text, “coming” is defined by the direct intervention in history to redeem Israel from Egypt “by trials, by signs and wonders.” G. Wehmeier writes, “God’s powerful status rests not on a mythical event but on his historical activity.”<sup>93</sup>

The prophets likewise use the language of presence-coming when looking back on the Exodus: “You went forth (יָצֵאתָ) <sup>94</sup> for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed” (Hab 3:13).<sup>95</sup> Vena concludes, “The coming of God was synonymous with salvation.”<sup>96</sup> Often, notions of God’s coming, judging, and saving deliverance are tied into the same text: “He is coming to judge the earth . . . Save us, O

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<sup>89</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94, also notes that “the notion that the Lord is a God who comes with salvation is succinctly captured by Hosea: ‘Let us press on to know YHWH; his going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth’ (6:3). This anticipation which characterizes the OT finds its fulfillment in part in Jesus Christ of whom it can be enthusiastically heralded, ‘Blessed be he who enters (*bô* ‘cometh,’ ASV) in the name of the Lord’ (Ps 118:26).”

<sup>90</sup> E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *IDB* 2:128.

<sup>91</sup> מַסָּה, “test, trial, proving,” *BDB*, 650.

<sup>92</sup> Jenni, *TLOT* 1:203.

<sup>93</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

<sup>94</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 393–94.

<sup>95</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 64–65, further notes that the coming of the LORD also brings about the rescue of Israel from exile and their restoration to the promised land (Isa 40:9–11; 43:1–15; 44:21–28, etc.).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 73.

God of our salvation, and gather us and deliver us from the nations” (1 Chr 16:33–35).

Arnold writes, “Isaiah foresees the Redeemer entering Zion once again, to those in Jacob ‘who repent of their sins’ (Isa 59:20).”<sup>97</sup>

Finally, the language of presence-coming is used when the LORD intervenes in history on the eschatological day of the LORD. Eugene H. Merrill writes,

Yahweh’s descent also figures in the imagery of eschatology for the prophets speak of the coming day of judgment as Yahweh’s coming down. According to Isaiah, Yahweh of Hosts ‘will come down to do battle on Mount Zion’ in a time of deliverance (Isa 34:4), and the same prophet implores that coming might take place soon (64:1[63:19]) and accomplish what such divine interventions had achieved in the past (v. 3[2]). Micah, while referring most immediately to the impending conquest of Samaria, looks ahead also to ultimate judgment when Yahweh ‘comes down and treads the high places of the earth’ (Mic 1:3). ‘Coming down’ in eschatological context bespeaks an ominous divine intervention.<sup>98</sup>

It is important to note that the LORD can come down in judgment, can come down at a separate time in deliverance and it still be the same “coming” event. In Zech 9:14, the “LORD will appear over them” while in 14:4 “His feet will stand on the mount of Olives.” God can come down in the clouds and judge and ride on the clouds in judgment though never fully coming all the way down. Micah 1:3 says that the LORD will tread on the high places of the earth” (Cf. Amos 4:13). Only in Zech 14:4 is it explicit that He will stand on Mount of Olives.

The language of presence-coming is found in texts where the LORD intervenes in history to give revelation, create or manage a covenant, test, judge, save, to come on the eschatological day of the LORD. Each of these is linguistically and conceptually linked to

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<sup>97</sup> Arnold, *NIDOTTE* 1:616–17, continues, “Presumably all this would remind the worshipper of the great royal psalm: ‘Lift up your heads, O you gates . . . that the King of glory may come in’ (Ps 24:7).”

<sup>98</sup> Merrill, *NIDOTTE* 2:534.

the coming of the LORD. When the Lord intervenes in His creation, He is conceptualized as being present in the location at the time of His intervention.

***The Coming Time of the LORD's Coming: The "Time," "Days," "Day," and the "End"***

The language of coming is also used in reference to a future period of time that will occur when the LORD acts. The phrase, "days are coming," denotes a future period of time but not necessarily the last time.<sup>99</sup> Martens writes,

In a word *bô* is used in the announcements of threat and promise. Thus even as *bô* is used in the announcement of judgment against Eli (1 Sam 2:31) and against Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:17), the pre-exilic prophets use it in the form of a prophetic perfect with reference to the judgment coming upon Israel (Amos 8:2; Hos 9:7; Mic 1:9; 7:12). For Zephaniah it is the coming day of the Lord's fierce anger (2:2); for Jeremiah it is a day of calamity also for Egypt (46:22) and Babylon (50:27); for Ezekiel it is the day of distress (Ezek 7:7, 10); and for Joel a day of destruction from Shaddai (Joel 1:15). This judgment will come because the people refused to repent (Isa 5:19; Jer 25:8–11; Zeph 2:3).<sup>100</sup>

It is most frequently used by Jeremiah to announce events that the LORD will bring to pass such as judgment (Jer 9:26 [H 24]; 19:6; 48:12; 49:2), [the day is coming, the time of your punishment] Jer 50:31f.), wrath (the wrath/punishment coming in one day: Isa 47:9), salvation (Jer 16:14<sup>101</sup>), the new covenant (Jer 31:31), as well as the coming messiah (Jer 23:5).<sup>102</sup>

The LORD declares through Ezekiel, "An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land" (7:3). The "end" is called the "time" and the "day" (v. 12), and "the day of the wrath of the LORD" (v. 19; cf. Nah 1:9). Here the "end" seems to refer to the

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<sup>99</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., writes, "Our verb is also used in the proclamations of salvation that Israel will come back to the land (Mic 4:8; Isa 35:10; 51:11; Zeph 3:20; Ezek 11:16; 34:13). Ezekiel, moreover, saw the glory of the LORD coming into the new temple (43:4) and Haggai foresaw the wealth of all the nations coming to the temple (2:7)."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

entire time when He comes in judgment (7:3) because “An end is coming” and “the end has come!” (v. 6). He says, “Now I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations” (v. 8; cf. vv. 3, 9, 27). These events of the end are contained in “the vision regarding all their multitude” (v. 13). When the LORD brings upon them their ways and abominations “then” they “will know” that He is the LORD (v. 4; cf. vv. 9, 27), and that He, the LORD is doing the smiting (v. 9).

### *The Coming of the Word of the LORD and Its Coming to Pass*

The language of presence-coming is also used in reference to future events that are accomplished in history by the LORD. In this usage, **נָבֵא** “is associated with the promise-fulfillment motif.”<sup>103</sup> Martens continues, “The verdict concerning the words (i.e. promises) of God by Joshua is that ‘all have come (*bôʿ*) to pass’ (Josh 23:14).”<sup>104</sup> John Bright notes that in every place where **נָבֵא** references God’s word or purpose it denotes “come to pass,” or “come true.”<sup>105</sup> Martens notes, “By bringing to pass either his threats or his promises YHWH demonstrates his dominion over history (Josh 23:15; 2 Kgs 19:25; Isa 3:1–2). Frequently the predictions use the causative Hiphil stem with *bôʿ* showing clearly that it is YHWH who is sovereignly guiding history (Exod 11:1; 1 Kgs 21:29; *passim*).”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> John Bright, *Proclamation and Presence* (eds. J. Durham, J. R. Porter; Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1970), 206; Cf. Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>106</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94. Martens further notes that **נָבֵא** “is used in the announcements of threat and promise. Thus even as *bôʿ* is used in the announcement of judgment against Eli (1 Sam 2:31) and against Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:17), the pre-exilic prophets use it in the form of a prophetic perfect with reference to the judgment coming upon Israel (Amos 8:2; Hos 9:7; Mic 1:9; 7:12). For Zephaniah it is the coming day of the LORD’s fierce anger (2:2); for Jeremiah it is a day of calamity also for Egypt (46:22) and Babylon (50:27); for Ezekiel it is the day of distress (Ezek 7:7, 10); and for Joel a day of destruction from Shaddai

### *The Coming of the Representative of the LORD*

The language of presence-coming is used for the coming and appearing of the various forms of the LORD's mediated presence. Scholars have noted that there is no consistent form of the LORD's appearing;<sup>107</sup> however, four traditional "*theologoumena*" have been identified:<sup>108</sup> כְּבוֹד (*kābōd*, glory), מַלְאָךְ (*mal'āk*, messenger or angel), פְּנֵי (pānīm face), and שֵׁם (*šēm* name).<sup>109</sup> Each of these represents the presence, whether visible or invisible, of the LORD.<sup>110</sup> The culmination of the presence-coming of the LORD is in the Messiah, or anointed One, who is also said to "come" (בֹּא).<sup>111</sup> Martens notes, "The word is used in connection with the coming 'Messiah' who will bring salvation."<sup>112</sup> The first instance is Gen 49:10,<sup>113</sup> and "is at least certain that Jacob speaks of a ruler that will come from the tribe of Judah. Ezekiel and Zechariah further this hope for the "*coming*" one (Ezek 21:27 [H 32]; Zech 9:9f.)."<sup>114</sup> In this respect, the coming of the LORD is mediated by the Messiah.<sup>115</sup> Eventually, the very phrase, "the Coming One," became a title for the Messiah.<sup>116</sup> Based on Zech 9:9 ("Behold, your king comes to you") in relation

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(Joel 1:15). This judgment will come because the people refused to repent (Isa 5:19; Jer 25:8–11; Zeph 2:3)."

<sup>107</sup> Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 37.

<sup>108</sup> These are the "representations" or "presentations" of the deity drawing near. Cf. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 37.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861, notes that "The cover of the ark is, at least from the time of P, the chariot throne of Yahweh, so that the entry of the ark is His coming." Cf. 1 Sam 4:6 f.; 2 Sam 6:9, 16; 2 Chr 8:11; Ps 24:7 ff.

<sup>111</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94–95.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>113</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:862.

<sup>114</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>115</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 65–8. The relevant passages for each tradition include: Gen 49:10 ("until Shiloh comes" or "until he comes to whom it belongs;" cf. Num 24:17); Zech 9:9 ("Your King is coming to you, . . . with salvation . . . humble;" cf. Ps 110:1; Is 9:6, 7; Jer 23:5, 6), Dan 7:13 ("the one like a Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven;" cf. Ezek 21:27 ("He who is coming whose right it is;" cf. Ps 2:6; 72:7, 10; Jer 23:5, 6; Ezek 34:24; 37:24).

<sup>116</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 95; Cf. Ezek 21:27 [H 32]; Zech 9:9f.; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 4:25; Acts 7:52.

to Isa 40:9 (“Behold your God . . . comes with might”), Beasley-Murray notes that there is some justification for the view that “the Messiah is the form of the appearance of Yahweh the Lord,”<sup>117</sup> and as such is viewed in some texts “as the form of Yahweh’s presence in the kingdom.”<sup>118</sup>

### ***The Place from Which the LORD Comes: The Invisible Heaven***

Israel clearly understood that even when the LORD was “dwelling with them” that He was also in heaven (Compare 1 Kgs 8:11–12 with vv. 23, 27, 30). Whatever was understood by the language of presence, and either the coming or departing of His glory, Scripture never loses sight of the truth that God is omnipresent: “Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you” (v. 27). While the language of the LORD’s coming often connotes the imagery of the LORD’s descent from heaven, in actuality, “heaven,” as the abode of God, is not, strictly speaking, “up.” Nehemiah notes that when the LORD “came down on Mount Sinai,” He then “spoke with them from heaven” (9:13). Even though the LORD had descended upon Sinai, He still could speak from heaven.<sup>119</sup> Sometimes, the visible manifestation of the LORD’s presence goes into and out of heaven (Judg 13:20).<sup>120</sup>

Most important for the present study, which will be seen in chapter three, the idea of the opening of heaven, or specifically, the “windows of heaven,” indicates God’s historical intervention.<sup>121</sup> Boman writes, “In both the other places where the *‘arubboth*

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<sup>117</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 24.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>119</sup> The NT continues this understanding. On the Mount of Transfiguration the Gospels record that God spoke from the midst of the cloud, which had descended upon them (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34–35) while Peter says that the voice came out of heaven (2 Pet 1:18).

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Gen 7:11; 8:2; 19:24; 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Isa 24:18ff.; Ezek 1:1; Mal 3:10. For NT examples see Matt 3:16–17; 17:5; Mark 1:10–11; 9:7; Luke 3:21–22; 9:35; John 1:32–34, 51; 12:28; Acts 1:11; 2:2–4; 3:21; 7:55–56; 9:3–4; 2 Pet 1:17; Rev 4:1; 19:11.

*hashshamayim* occurs (2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Mal 3:10), it is a religious term; ‘windows’ is an expression for Jahveh’s direct intervention.”<sup>122</sup> Regarding the location of heaven, Ezek 1:1–4 seems to reject any dogmatism that heaven is “up.” In v. 1 Ezekiel writes, “. . . the heavens were opened,” which allowed him to see “visions of God.” In v. 4 he states that he saw the storm wind, which is the chariot-throne of the Lord (cf. vv. 25–28), coming from the “north” rather than coming “down” from heaven.

### ***The Visible Versus the Invisible Presence of the LORD***

There is no indication that scripture directly equates the immanent presence of the LORD with His visible manifestation, though visible indicators are often used. Oepke cautions,

Yahweh, however, is never tied to specific media in His self-declaration. He can come in dreams (Gen 20:3; 28:13), in more or less veiled theophanies (Gen 18:1 ff.; 32:25 ff.; Exod 3:2 ff.; 24:10 ff.; 34:6 ff.; Ps 50:3), in the cloud, and esp. also in visions at the calling of the prophets (Isa 6:1 ff.; Jer 1:4 ff.; Ezek 1:4 ff.), in the storm, in the quiet breath (1 Kgs 19:12 f.), in His Spirit (Num 24:2; *Jub.* 3:10; 11:29; 1 S. 11:6; 19:20), with His hand (1 Kgs 18:46), in His Word (Num 22:9; 2 Sam 7:4; 1 Kgs 17:2 etc.) etc.; cf. also the common יהוה אֱלֹהִים, Amos 6:8; Isa 1:24.<sup>123</sup>

There are many forms of the LORD’s coming and presence not all of which are visible.<sup>124</sup>

The period of the Exodus demonstrates the veiled presence of the LORD with Israel. When the LORD appeared to Moses in Exodus 3 it is indicated in v. 9 that the LORD had already come down to observe the condition of Israel. From that time the LORD

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<sup>122</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 177, further notes, “The Hebrew word for ‘firmament,’ *raqia*’, betrays its individuality by the fact that it occurs only in religious expressions (Genesis 1; Pss 19:2; 150:1; Dan 12:3; Ezek 1:22f., 25f.; 10:1).” Cf. Ps 78:23f.

<sup>123</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861.

<sup>124</sup> As previously noted, there are four traditional “*theologoumena*”: **כְּבוֹד** (*kābōd*, glory), **מַלְאָךְ** (*mal’āk*, messenger or angel), **פָּנֵי** (*pānīm* face), and **שֵׁם** (*šēm* name). A study of these is not necessary for the present thesis. Several sources could be referenced for further study: Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:19–45; Carey C. Newman, “Glory, Glorify [**כְּבוֹד**, *kavodh*; *δόξα doxa*, *δοξάζω doxazō*],” *NIDB* 2:576–80; C. Westermann, “**כבד** *kbd* to be heavy,” *TLOT* 2:590–602; Kittel and von Rad, “*δοκέω*, *δόξα*, *δοξάζω*, *συνδοξάζω*, *ἔνδοξος*, *ἐνδοξάζω*, *παράδοξος*,” *TDNT* 2:232–55; Walter C. Kaiser, “**יָשָׁב** (*yāshab*) dwell” *TWOT* 411–13; A. S. van der Woude, “**שֵׁם** (*šēm*) name,” *TLOT* 3:1348–67.

began intervening in history through Moses. Though He was not yet seen by them, His presence was revealed through the events of the plagues upon Egypt (Exod 8:22). In the plague of the firstborn, the LORD said, “About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first born in the land of Egypt shall die, . . . there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again” (Exod 11:4–6<sup>125</sup>). It was only after they departed Egypt that the pillar of fire and cloud was visibly seen (Exod 13:21). To only Moses was the coming glory of the LORD visibly manifested prior to the Exodus (Exod 3:2ff.). Even in this instance the LORD’s presence was not continuously visible since the LORD gave him a sign by which Moses would know that the LORD was with him and had sent him (v. 12).

This section has presented evidence that when the OT portrays the coming of the LORD it is referring to the LORD’s direct intervention in history. For every type of divine intervention (revelation, salvation, covenant, testing, judgment, wrath, etc.), an example can be found in the OT where those interventions were said to have been caused by the LORD’s coming. The following section will discuss the imagery (both literary device and accounts of actual historical events) used by OT writers to describe the LORD’s coming to intervene.

#### Theophany: The Coming Glory-Presence of the LORD

Theophany is a significant motif depicting the coming of the LORD in the OT, which have important implications for the coming of the Lord in the NT. In chapter three the case will be made that the NT coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is an extended theophany. This section will, therefore, provide a biblical-theological foundation for understanding

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Exod 12:30; Dan 12:1; Joel 2:2; Matt 24:21; Rev 7:14.

theophanies, which will be necessary for understanding the NT coming of the Lord as presented in the next chapter.

“Theophany” is a word that is commonly used for God’s self-disclosure.<sup>126</sup> The word is from the Greek compound θεοφάνεια comprising the noun θεός “god” and the verb φαίνειν “to appear.”<sup>127</sup> The scriptural literary form of theophany has been extensively studied.<sup>128</sup> While at least one scholar places theophany within the category of revelation,<sup>129</sup> which is not altogether incorrect, a theophany primarily portrays the coming of the LORD. Beasley-Murray correctly relates theophany, coming, and revelation when he writes,

The decisive element in the theophany descriptions of the Old Testament, accordingly, is the concept of the coming of God; . . . the supremely important matter is that God *comes* into the world, now in the present and (in the teaching of the prophets) in the future, and in his coming he reveals himself. Theophany means “God’s self-manifestation in the midst of historical, worldly event.”<sup>130</sup> The descriptions of it in the Old Testament express “the livingness, the dynamic, indeed the passion of Yahweh. *He comes to act!*”<sup>131</sup> When the eschatological perspective is added to the historical dimension, the concept of theophany stands for the coming of God into the world for the revelation of his glory and accomplishment of his purpose for the world he has made. The nature of that coming, the meaning of the revelation in the coming, and the understanding of the divine purpose achieved in the coming require the prophetic word for their

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<sup>126</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “Theophany, Theology of,” *NIDOTTE* 4:1247–48, writes, “A theophany is an actual manifestation of God’s presence, i.e., an appearance of God. The word, theophany, derives from the G compound, *theophaneia*, consisting of the nom. *theos*, god, and the vb., *phainō* appear. The Greek original was used to describe a festival at Delphi, at which the images of the gods were shown to the people (H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1974, 315). The Heb. lacks a precise translational equivalent, the closet begin the vb. *rōh*, see, in the ni., with the meaning ‘appear.’” The verbs (רָאָה *rā’ā*) “to see,” in the Niphal (רָאָה *n.*) “to appear.”

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Niehaus, *NIDOTTE* 4:1247–49; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*; Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*; Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965).

<sup>129</sup> Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 20.

<sup>130</sup> F. Schnutenhaus, “Das Kommen und Ercheinen Gottes im Alten Testament,” *ZAW* 76 (1964): 21, quoted in Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 164.

elucidation; but it is God who comes, or there is no redemption, no revelation, and no establishment of the divine will.<sup>132</sup>

Theophanic form and imagery appear in scripture when an actual manifestation of the coming of the LORD is narrated. Theophanic language also appears as a literary device either to portray the LORD's invisible action in the heavenly realm or merely as a literary stylistic addition. As a literary form, theophany is the means by which scripture writers portrayed the action of the LORD in history to reveal Himself.<sup>133</sup>

### ***A Brief Biblical Theology of Theophany***

A number of scholars have noted that biblical theophany follows a specific literary form called the theophanic *Gattung*.<sup>134</sup> Kuntz summarizes the form of biblical theophany as “a temporal, partial, and intentionally allusive self-disclosure initiated by the sovereign deity at a particular place, the reality of which evokes the convulsion of nature and the fear and dread of man, and whose unfolding emphasizes visual and audible aspects generally according to a literary form.”<sup>135</sup> Building off of the studies of Kuntz and others, Jeffrey Niehaus conducts a detailed analysis of all biblical theophanies.<sup>136</sup> He has identified nine noteworthy biblical theological characteristics, which can only be listed here:<sup>137</sup>

Theophanies: 1) are divinely initiated; 2) are temporary; 3) always occur in a covenantal context to save or to judge; 4) result in the impartation of holiness; 5) result in both a

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<sup>132</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 10.

<sup>133</sup> See Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:613–14, for a discussion of genre and rhetoric in the OT description of historical events with both mundane and extraordinary language.

<sup>134</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 20; Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 44; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 7–16.

<sup>135</sup> Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 45.

<sup>136</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 21, builds upon several works that are classic in biblical studies regarding theophanies. The most notable include Jeremias, *Theophanie*, which examines both scriptural and ANE theophanies. Second, Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 18, who also builds upon Jeremias' work, but is uniquely dedicated to the identifying the form of Scriptural theophanies.

<sup>137</sup> The reader is strongly encouraged to examine Niehaus' presentation of these elements. Cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 20–30; cf. Niehaus, *NIDOTTE* 4:1247–50; see also Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 31–46.

revealing and a concealing of the Lord; 6) invoke human fear; 7) cause natural upheavals; 8) provide an adumbrated eschatology; and, 9) impart a verbal revelation.

### ***Theophany, Presence, Glory, and Holiness***

Of these biblical theological characteristics, the impartation of holiness and its implications for the proposed model require additional discussion. The LORD imparts holiness wherever He dwells. Niehaus writes, “God is holy, and he imparts holiness where and for as long as he appears.”<sup>138</sup> Where the LORD’s presence is, or the localized sphere of His presence, there holiness is imparted (Lev 10:3).<sup>139</sup> There is also a progressive increase in the sphere of His presence or sphere of influence. Niehaus writes,

Yahweh warns Moses that he is standing on “holy ground.” As long as Yahweh is there, the ground is holy because his presence sanctifies it. . . . Yahweh’s holiness consecrates the Tent of Meeting, as he says to Moses, “There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated [שִׁדְּקָה, ‘made holy’] by my glory” (Exod 29:42–43).<sup>140</sup>

Each time of the LORD’s theophanic appearance, the range of the holiness increases.<sup>141</sup> It begins with the small patch of ground around the burning bush. Then when the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, the mountain was considered holy such that no one or animal was to touch the foot of the mountain (Exod 19:12, 21–24). When the LORD filled the tabernacle and therefore dwelt in the midst of the people of Israel, the whole congregation became “holy” and sanctified by the LORD’s presence (Exod 29:42–43).

The place and people remain holy only as long as the LORD is present. Niehaus writes,

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 25. This observation has direct application to the covenant people Israel as being “saints” lit. “holy ones,” in Dan 7:18, 21, 22, 25, and 27.

<sup>139</sup> Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 42, writes, “[T]he deity appears in places which have been, or are presently being, sanctified by his presence. . . . Holy places are regarded as those precisely favored from time to time by God’s theophanic presence.” Cf. Exod 3; Josh 5:15; 1 Kgs 8:10–11.

<sup>140</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 25, n. 30, says “this holiness comes from God himself, whether it involves the consecration of a place or of the people (cf. Exod 19:6, 10, 14; Num 11:1; Josh 3:5; 7:13).”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

The same holy presence descends upon and fills the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11) when Solomon dedicates it; and Yahweh’s presence (his “Name”) is what makes the temple holy: “I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated [הִקְדִּישְׁתִּי] this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever” (1 Kgs 9:3). God’s holiness is not a quality that lingers when God departs (Ezek 10), nor does it somehow bind God to the place (Jer 7:9–15). God’s presence is what makes the place holy—but only as he remains there.<sup>142</sup>

When the priests violated the holiness of the temple with their idols, the LORD said He was driven far away from His sanctuary (Ezek 8:6). The place does not remain holy when the LORD departs;<sup>143</sup> rather, in His departure He commands that the temple be desecrated (Ezek 9:6–7).<sup>144</sup>

Further, His presence necessitates consecration or sanctification of those individuals and objects within that sphere of presence, which demands an atoning sacrifice. The fact that the people were sinful necessitated that a sacrifice be given to atone for their sins. In Lev 16:16, Aaron was told to “make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities” (Lev 16:16; cf. vv. 19–20, 30–34; Isa 6:5–7). Because of Israel’s sin and rebellion the presence of the LORD would cause wrath to fall immediately. The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the sons of Israel, ‘You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you’” (Exod 33:5). It was for this reason that Moses set up the tent of meeting a significant distance outside the camp of Israel (cf. vv. 7–9). When the sin of Israel drove the LORD from His

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<sup>142</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 25–26; see Jeffrey Niehaus, “The Central Sanctuary: Where and When?” *TynBul* 43 (1992): 2–30, for the importance of the divine “name.”

<sup>143</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 25; cf. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 42.

<sup>144</sup> Lamar E. Cooper, *Ezekiel* (NAC 17; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 129.

sanctuary (Ezek 8:6), the Glory-Presence left the temple and stood over the mountain to oversee the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 11:23).

### *Identifying a Theophany: Theophanic Markers*

Biblical theophanies can be described as “Sinaitic,” meaning that they generally include elements found in that monumental theophanic descent of the LORD upon Sinai (Exod 19:16, 18–20). Theophanies prior to this event are similar but are not as comprehensive.<sup>145</sup> Numerous elements are present that accompany the theophanic presence of the LORD, which could be used as markers to identify the presence of the LORD in theophany. Niehaus identifies these principal markers:

Yahweh’s coming is portrayed with theophanic language: e.g., “thunder” (קִלְתַּת, 19:19), “lightning” (בְּרָקִים, 19:16), “thick cloud” (עָנָן כָּבֵד, 19:16), “smoke” (עָשָׁן, 19:18), and “fire” (אֵשׁ, 19:18). Some phrases are used now for the first time: “a very loud trumpet blast” (קֶלֶל שֹׁפָר חָזֵק, 19:16), “the smoke billowed up” (וַיַּעַל עָשָׁנוּ, 19:18), “like smoke from a furnace” (כַּעֲשָׁן הַכִּבְּשָׁן, 19:18), “the whole mountain trembled violently” (וַיִּחַרְד כָּל־הָהָר מְאֹד, 19:18). A subsequent account in Exodus 20 echoes these descriptions: “thunder” (הַקּוֹלֹת, 20:18), “lightning” (הַלְפִידִם, 20:18), “the trumpet” (קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר, 20:18), “the mountain in smoke” (הָהָר עָשָׁן, 20:18), and “thick darkness” (הָעֲרָפֶל, 20:21).<sup>146</sup>

Noteworthy theophanic imagery that recur in other biblical theophanies include earthquake,<sup>147</sup> storm-cloud,<sup>148</sup> combination of storm-cloud and earthquake,<sup>149</sup> thick cloud,

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<sup>145</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 29.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>147</sup> Earthquake alone: Isa 6:3–4; 29:6–7; 64:1–3 [H 63:19b–64:2]; Jer 4:24; Amos 9:1, 5; Joel 3:16; Hag 2:6–7.

<sup>148</sup> Storm-cloud alone (Judg 5:4–5; Deut 33:2–3; Hab 3:3–4; Zech 9:14; Pss 18:9–14 (H 10–15); 68:7–8 (8–9); and 77:16–19 [H 17–20]). Edwin C. Kingsbury, “The Theophany *Topos* and the Mountain of God,” *JBL* 86 (1967), 206, notes that in some examples (e.g. Judg 5:4–5), the quaking of the earth is secondary and merely reflects the reverberations of the earth due to the thunder. Cf. Jer 50:46; Ezek 31:16; 3:12–13.

<sup>149</sup> Combination of storm and earthquake in one text: 1 Kgs 19:11–14; Isa 30:27–33; 42:13–15; Jer 10:10, 12–14; cf. 51:15–16; Nah 1:2–5; Ps 18:7–15 [H 8–16] (note that the combination is in series 7–8 earthquake, 9–15 storm. Cf. 2 Sam 22:7–16); Pss 50:1–6; 97:2a, 3–5.

thick darkness and gloom,<sup>150</sup> thunder and/or voice,<sup>151</sup> and “silence” or “be silent.”<sup>152</sup> “Silence” (הַדְמָמָה) and “voice” (קוֹל *qôl*) are also sometimes connected in theophany.<sup>153</sup> Voice, קוֹל, “usually refers to the thunder as Jahweh’s roaring voice.”<sup>154</sup> Kline writes, “One of the prominent aspects of theophany throughout the Old Testament is its distinctive sound. Sometimes this sound is called “the voice of Yahweh” or ‘his voice.’”<sup>155</sup> The pre-eminent theophany, at Sinai, emphasized that “you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice.”<sup>156</sup> In both verses where the theophany is described the trumpet occurs at the beginning of the account along with a reference to a cloud, thunder, and lightning (vv. 16, 19). In v. 13 the trumpet is the only element mentioned.<sup>157</sup>

Special notice should be given to the occurrence of a trumpet given its unique connection to the rapture. Several uses of trumpets are found in scripture. The trumpet is blown on the Day of Atonement that occurs in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8–9). The trumpet may be used here to symbolize the meeting with the Lord on that day. Robert H. O’Connell notes that the trumpet/horn was also used in the OT for both calling for arms as well as calling off an attack (2 Sam 2:28; 18:16; 20:1, 22). He writes,

In the military arena, the was used for sounding the alarm at the approach of an enemy (Neh 4:18[12], 20[14]; Isa 18:3; Jer 4:5–6, 19, 21; 6:1, 17; Ezek 33:3–6; Hos 5:8; Amos 2:2; 3:6), for summoning the armies of Israel to take up arms (Judg 3:27; 6:34; 1 Sam 13:3; Jer 42:14; 51:27), for

<sup>150</sup> Albrecht Oepke, “νεφέλη, νέφος,” *TDNT* 4:902–10.

<sup>151</sup> Genesis 3:8; Exod 20:18; Zeph 2:2b.

<sup>152</sup> Zephaniah 1:11; Zech 2:13.

<sup>153</sup> See ST citations in Lust, “A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?” 111; cf. Ps 107:29; Job 4:14–16;

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. Cf. Amos 1:2; Jer 10:13; Pss 18:13[14]; 29:3ff.; 46:6[7]; 68:33[34]; 77:18[19]; 104:7.

<sup>155</sup> Meredith G. Kline, “Primal Parousia,” *WTJ* 40 (1978), 246; cf. Ps 18:13[H 14]; Isa 30:31; Jer 25:30; Joel 3:16.

<sup>156</sup> Deuteronomy 4:12, 15; cf. 10–12.

<sup>157</sup> The standard and the trumpet together mark the beginning of the LORD’s coming to observe the people (Isa 18:3–4) and precedes His action in wrath (Isa 18:5–6).

signaling (often together with vocal shrilling [vb. *rûa<sup>c</sup>/nom. t<sup>r</sup>rû<sup>c</sup>â*]) an attack (Josh 6:16, 20; Judg 7:18–20, 22; Job 39:24–25), or for calling off an attack (2 Sam 2:28; 18:16; 20:1, 22).<sup>158</sup>

In accord with this practice, the trumpet is seen in relation to both the beginning and end of the day of the LORD. When used in combination with “signal,” “standard,” or “sound the alarm” it is followed by imagery of war and theophany.<sup>159</sup> Its occurrence is likely because the theophanic storm-wind that is coming is what is bringing the war,<sup>160</sup> or signifying the approaching of the LORD’s presence.<sup>161</sup> In the announcement of the LORD’s judgment upon Babylon, His presence is declared due to the necessity of the armies He will use as instruments of His wrath must be consecrated: “Lift up a signal in the land, blow a trumpet among the nations! Consecrate the nations against her” (Jer 51:27). Theophanic imagery abounds later in the chapter to further confirm His presence (vv. 29–32). In one place the Lord says, “behold, the days are coming, . . . that I will cause a trumpet blast of war to be heard” (Jer 49:2). When the trumpet occurs with gathering it generally signifies the inauguration of salvation, peace, and the kingdom.<sup>162</sup> This application is likely due to its use on the Day of Atonement to signify that the people’s sins were atoned for.<sup>163</sup> In one place, Zech 9:14, the LORD is the one who blows the trumpet, and rather than in wrath against Israel as is the case in most of the text, this trumpet announces the coming of the LORD to rescue Israel.

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<sup>158</sup> Robert H. O’Connell, “שׁוֹפָר (*šôpār*), ram’s horn,” *NIODTTE* 4:68–9.

<sup>159</sup> Isaiah 18:3–6; Jer 6:1.

<sup>160</sup> Jeremiah 4:5–6, 11–13, 19–21; 51:27; Hos 5:8; Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6; Zeph 1:16, *passim*.

<sup>161</sup> 1 Chronicles 15:24.

<sup>162</sup> Isaiah 27:13.

<sup>163</sup> Leviticus 25:9.

## Summary and Conclusion

This section presented evidence to support the following lexical points of the proposed model: 1) The language of presence-coming is used for the immanent invisible presence of God in a specific time and place. The LORD is “present” when He acts in history. It is used to speak of God’s action to manifest Himself in a special way, which distinguishes between God’s immanence in creation and His transcendence outside of creation. 2) By using the language of presence-coming Scripture can mark distinct periods of God’s special acts with His covenant people and establishing a relationship with them. 3) Scripture references these times of God’s special activity with words depicting God’s movement such as to descend/come down, to ascend/go up/depart, to go out/go forth, to visit/visitation, to see, look at, inspect/to appear, and come near, approach, which were categorized as the language of presence-coming. 4) The language of presence-coming is used for the direct historical intervention of God to give revelation, create or manage a covenant, to test, inspect, judge, discipline, execute wrath, and to rescue, save, or redeem.

This section also briefly discussed the biblical theology of theophany. The OT uses various theophanic markers to depict the veiled or concealed presence-coming of the LORD including the storm-cloud, thunder, lightning, earthquake, and trumpet. Because of their climax in the descriptions of the LORD descending upon Sinai, other OT theophanies using these markers are referred to as Sinaitic theophanies. The OT portrays the eschatological coming of the Lord as a Sinaitic theophany.

Finally, the Glory-Presence of the LORD imparts holiness in the location where He dwells within what could be called His sphere of influence. Sin caused Moses to move the tent of meeting, where the Glory-Presence met with Moses, to be placed a significant

distance from the camp to keep the LORD from destroying the people because of His holiness and their sin. Later, the Glory-Presence of the LORD was driven from His temple in Jerusalem due to the sin and desecration caused by the people. When the Glory-Presence of the LORD departed His temple, before He ascended back to heaven, He remained present in the land to oversee the desecration/purging process.

### **Part 2–The Revelation of the LORD: The Result of His Coming**

Closely related to the coming of the LORD is the revelation of the LORD. Scholars have noted that there is no formal concept of revelation in the OT;<sup>164</sup> however, it can be stated that revelation can be viewed in both a broad and narrow view. In the broad view, revelation is the entire process by which the LORD reveals Himself: His decision, His action He performs to reveal Himself, and the result. It is in the broad view that scholars can equate the revelation and the coming of the LORD. Revelation is that which occurs when the LORD comes and acts in history, which was the first point established above regarding scripture’s use of the language of presence-coming. Revelation in this narrow view is a historical process by which the LORD reveals Himself through historical events. This section will present evidence that revelation occurs when humans recognize or perceive the presence and sovereignty of the LORD through historical events that are in accord with the previously revealed word of the LORD. The coming of the LORD results in the revelation of the LORD; therefore, the occurrence of divine revelation is evidence that the LORD has come.

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<sup>164</sup> Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” *TDNT* 3:577, notes that by the time of the writing of Daniel, “the concept of revelation has not yet been fixed dogmatically. Though it is central to the whole of OT piety, there is as yet no settled term for it.”

## Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Revelation of the LORD

Two principal words express divine revelation in the OT, which are **יָדָע** (hi.), “to perceive, know,”<sup>165</sup> and, **הִלָּךְ** (pi), “to uncover.”<sup>166</sup> These words are connected in Job 36:10–12.<sup>167</sup> In Jeremiah **הִלָּךְ** is used to denote a sealed scroll versus an “open” scroll (Jer 32:11, 14).<sup>168</sup> While **הִלָּךְ** frequently denotes divine revelation it is not a technical term.<sup>169</sup> While ἀποκαλύπτειν, “revelation,” is never used in the LXX for **יָדָע**,<sup>170</sup> by all accounts, **יָדָע** is more important theologically for the OT understanding of revelation than **הִלָּךְ**.<sup>171</sup>

### *To Know, Knowledge*

The most important aspect of OT revelation is that it regards a relationship, meaning that experience through time is a necessary prerequisite. Gilchrist notes, “In certain contexts it [**יָדָע**] means ‘to distinguish.’ ‘To know good and evil’ (Gen 3:5, 22) is the result of disobeying God.”<sup>172</sup> Gilchrist further writes that this type of knowledge is “ordinarily gained by experience.”<sup>173</sup> The word **יָדָע** is also used for divine revelation in history. Schottroff writes, “A second usage of *yad<sup>c</sup>* ni./hi. as a revelatory term, attested primarily in

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<sup>165</sup> Paul. R. Gilchrist, “**יָדָע** (*yāda<sup>a</sup>*) know,” *TWOT* 366–68, notes that the closest synonyms are “to discern” and “to recognize.”

<sup>166</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “**הִלָּךְ** (*gālā*) uncover, remove,” *TWOT* 160–61; C. Westermann and R. Albertz, “**אֶלְגַּל** *gh* to uncover,” *TLOT* 1:314–20; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:576–77.

<sup>167</sup> Job 36:9–12, “Then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they have magnified themselves. He opens their ear (*gālā*) to instruction, and commands that they return from evil. If they hear and serve Him, they will end their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures. But if they do not hear, they shall perish by the sword and they will die without knowledge (*dā<sup>c</sup>at*).” Cf. v. 15, “He delivers the afflicted in their affliction, and opens their ear in time of oppression.”

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., “Since it is used of men as well as of God, it must not be thought of as a technical term for God’s revelation. To Samuel he reveals himself directly (cf. Isa 22:14) and to David he sometimes mediated his revelation through the prophet Nathan. To ordinary folk he reveals himself in dreams or visions (Job 33:16) and in trying experiences (Job 36:10).”

<sup>170</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:576, notes that **יָדָע** is never used for ἀποκαλύπτειν in the LXX.

<sup>171</sup> Waltke, *TWOT* 160; W. Schottroff, “**יָדָע** (*yad<sup>c</sup>*) to perceive, know,” *TLOT* 2:508–21; Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366–68; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:576.

<sup>172</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366–68.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

hymnic statements, relates Yahweh’s self-declaration to historical demonstrations of power (Pss. 9:17; 48:4; 77:15, 20; 79:10; 88:13; 98:2; 103:7), incl. the occasional, markedly anthropomorphic discussion of the ‘revelation of Yahweh’s hand’ (Isa 66:14; Jer 16:21; cf. Ps 109:27).”<sup>174</sup>

Another form of  $\text{דָּעַת}$  is ( $\text{דַּעַת}$ ) *da<sup>c</sup>at* “knowledge, cunning.” Gilchrist writes,

[T]he root expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses. . . . *da<sup>c</sup>at* is a general term for knowledge, particularly that which is of a personal, experimental nature (Prov 24:5). . . . *da<sup>c</sup>at* is also used for discernment (Ps 119:66). Both deeds committed unintentionally (Deut 4:42; 19:4; Josh 20; 3, 5; *b<sup>e</sup> lî da<sup>c</sup>at*) and mistaken opinions are ‘without knowledge’ (*lô<sup>v</sup> da<sup>c</sup>at*, Prov 19:2).<sup>175</sup>

So then, knowledge is related to experience as well as action in respect to a divine moral code.<sup>176</sup> “Knowledge” implies a relationship and intimate familiarity of the thing known.

Waltke writes, “The symbolism of marriage shows that to ‘know *I AM*’ (Hos 2:20; 4:1; 5:4; 6:3; 13:4) denotes covenant intimacy, loyalty, and obedience, not merely correct information about him.”<sup>177</sup> Vos agrees with this understanding when he writes,

It is true, the Gospel teaches that to know God is life eternal. But the concept of ‘knowledge’ here is not to be understood in its Hellenic sense, but in the Shemitic sense. According to the former, ‘to know’ means to mirror the reality of a thing in one’s consciousness. The Shemitic and Biblical idea is to have the reality of something practically interwoven with the inner experience of life. Hence ‘to know’ can stand in the Biblical idiom for ‘to love,’ ‘to single out in love.’ Because God desires to be *known* after this fashion, He has caused His revelation to take place in the milieu of the historical life of a people. The circle of revelation is not a school, but a ‘covenant.’<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:516–17, continues, “Passages like Isa 64:2[H 1]; Ps 76:1[H2], which mention the “publication” of Yahweh’s name in historical demonstrations of his power, indicate the close relationship between the two types of statements.”

<sup>175</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366–67.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 836.

<sup>178</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 8.

Gilchrist says, “*yāda* is used to express acquaintance with a person . . . . God knows Moses by name and face to face (Exod 33:17; Deut 34:10).”<sup>179</sup> When used in reference to a people in relation to the LORD, “. . . the verb indicates without exception not a merely intellectual knowledge or ignorance but a relationship to the deity that includes practical behavior: ‘to know Yahweh’ in the sense of ‘to be acquainted with,’ ‘to be concerned with,’ ‘to acknowledge.’”<sup>180</sup> Schottroff continues,

In a positive sense, “to know Yahweh” refers to proper behavior toward him (par. to *yr* “to fear” 1 Kgs 8:43; Isa 11:2; Ps 119:79; Prov 1:7; 2:5; 2 Chr 6:33; *bd* “to serve” 1 Chr 28:9; *mn* hi. “to believe” Isa 43:10; *drš* “to seek” Ps 9:11; *hšq b* “to cling to” Ps 91:14; *qr b<sup>e</sup>šēm* “to call by name” Jer 10:25; Ps 79:6; cf. further Pss 36:11; 87:4; Job 24:1; Prov 3:6); conversely, “not knowing Yahweh” signifies apostasy from him in violation of his demands (1 Sam 2:12f.; Job 18:21).<sup>181</sup>

When God comes, it is God himself that is revealed rather than statements. Revelation is, as Moule states, “personal rather than propositional.”<sup>182</sup> The purpose of the coming of the LORD, His acts in history, is to bring knowledge of the LORD. He acts so that people may “know” Him. This is not propositional knowledge, but experiential knowledge.<sup>183</sup>

This type of knowledge (experiential, relational, and moral), is revealed when the LORD comes to test; and in that testing, knowledge of both God and the humans being “tested” is revealed. During the foremost theophanic coming and self-revelation of the LORD on Mount Sinai, Moses declared the LORD’s purpose in coming: “Do not be afraid; for God has come (בּוֹא) in order to test (נִסֶּה) you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin” (Exod 20:20). The problem is that there is no indication on what Israel is being tested. In fact, as Moshe Greenberg observes, “No hint

<sup>179</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366.

<sup>180</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:517; cf. Job 36:10, “One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.”

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> C. F. D. Moule, “Revelation,” *IDB* 4:55.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

is given anywhere that Israel is at all on trial at Sinai, or that God’s ‘coming’ has as its immediate purpose to put Israel to any sort of test.”<sup>184</sup> In his examination of Deut 4:10, 5:24ff., and Judg 3:1–11, he concludes that in Exod 20:20, “test” (נסה) connotes “experience of.”<sup>185</sup> Greenberg writes,

Entirely apart, then, from the content of God’s utterances at Sinai, and in addition to confirming the prophecy of Moses, it is the idea of both Exodus and Deuteronomy that the great purpose of this unparalleled public theophany was to impress the awe of God indelibly upon Israel by letting them all experience—see, hear, and know—him directly.<sup>186</sup>

Thus, the text could be rendered “God has come to cause you to have an experience of Him in order that the fear of him may be present with you to keep you from sinning.”<sup>187</sup>

Greenberg’s interpretation is insightful and correct as far as it goes; however, it falls short in its scope. As Greenberg states, there is no indication of any immediate trial; however, there are repeated examples in previous and later encounters where the LORD “tests” Israel for various reasons (cf. Exod 15:25; 16:4; Deut 8:2; 16; 13:3). The first two events occurred before the descent of the Lord upon Mt. Sinai after they crossed the Red Sea. Paul identified this event as the moment when Israel, as a nation, was baptized into the Holy Spirit. He writes, “[O]ur fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moss in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:1–4). Paul seems to be marking this baptism as the moment when the Spirit-Presence of the LORD came

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<sup>184</sup> Moshe Greenberg, “נסה in Exodus 20:20 and the Purpose of the Sinaitic Theophany,” 274.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., writes, “The idea suggests itself that the first purpose clause of Exod 20:20, like that of Deut 4:10, refers to this purpose of theophany—to give Israel a direct, palpable experience of God.”

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>187</sup> Greenberg, “נסה in Exodus 20:20 and the Purpose of the Sinaitic Theophany,” 276.

upon the nation as a group with a unique purpose of separating them out from other nations as holy. From this point onward the Spirit-Presence was with them and testing them as to whether or not they would walk in His instruction (Exod 16:4), and giving them a direct experience (revelation) of His holy presence. The baptism, then, seems to signify the sphere of testing for revelation, holiness, and sanctification.

The last three texts provide the three categories of testing that occur by the Spirit-Presence. Once the Spirit-Presence of the LORD descends both Israel and Jesus are “tested” three times: by hunger (Deut 8:2; Matt 4:2–4); by pride (Deut 8:16–17; Matt 4:5–7); and finally on proper worship (Deut 13:3; Matt 4:8–10). These tests were conducted when the LORD, the Spirit,<sup>188</sup> “led” them “in the wilderness” (Deut 8:2; Matt 4:1) in order to test them (Deut 8:2, 16; 13:3; Matt 4:1), humble them and let them be hungry (Deut 8:2; Matt 4:2), and to determine if they would keep His commandments (Deut 8:2–3, 13:3). Again, the baptism of the Spirit-Presence seems to signify the sphere of testing for revelation, holiness, and sanctification.

Knowledge of the human heart is also made known through divine judgment and testing. Schottroff writes,

God’s statements by which Yahweh himself documents his judging and examining knowledge (Gen 20:6; 22:12; 2 Kgs 19:27 = Isa 37:28; Isa 48:4; Jer 48:30; Ezek 11:5; Amos 5:12), and historical retrospectives which attribute to a particular event the character of a test arranged by Yahweh for the purpose of gaining knowledge, correspond to these confessions (see *nsh* pi. as a par. term: Deut 8:2; 13:4; Judg 3:4; 2 Chr 32:31).<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 3:17–18 where Paul equates Spirit and Lord.

<sup>189</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:516.

Therefore, scripture connects “to know” with divine assessment or testing of the human heart through historical events.<sup>190</sup> In Exod 15:25 says, “There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.” The LORD required that Israel only gather the daily supply of manna so “that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction” (Exod 16:4). In every case the LORD was present, by word, Spirit, or Glory-Cloud, with those whom He was testing.

Also, humans are judged for lack of knowledge,<sup>191</sup> which is equated with disobedience to His word or covenant. Disobedience to His word or covenant is said to be “forgetting the LORD:” “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today” (Deut 8:11).<sup>192</sup> The LORD said through Hosea, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6). Specifically, the knowledge they lack, for which they are judged, is knowledge of the LORD and His deeds: “But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, nor do they consider the work of His hands. Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge” (Isa 5:12–13; cf. 1:3).

### ***Unveiling, Uncovering, Revealing***

The word פִּלֵּץ (pi), “to uncover” is primarily used in reference to the organs of perception.<sup>193</sup> While it is not a technical term for revelation,<sup>194</sup> it is used in a number of texts that are similar to the NT’s use of ἀποκαλύπτω, or ἀποκάλυψις. For example, פִּלֵּץ is

<sup>190</sup> Exodus 15:25; 16:4; Deut 8:2, 16; Judg 2:22; 3:1, 4; Ps 66:10.

<sup>191</sup> Hosea 4:1, 14.

<sup>192</sup> Deuteronomy 8:14; Ps 106:21.

<sup>193</sup> Westermann and Albertz, *TLOT* 1:316–17, write, “‘to uncover = open’ the ear (a human subj.: 1 Sam 20:2, 12f.: 22:8[bis], 17; Ruth 4:4; divine subj.: 1 Sam 9:15; 2 Sam 7:27 = 1 Chron 17:25; Job 22:16; 36:10, 15); ‘to expose = open’ the eye (Num 24:4, 16; cf. pi. Num 22:31 and Ps 119:18).” Cf. Waltke, *TWOT* 160–61.

<sup>194</sup> Waltke, *TWOT* 160, notes that it is non-technical because “it is used of men as well as of God.” Cf. Westermann and Albertz, *TLOT* 1:319.

used with סוד (*sōd*) “secret” in the “classic statement about God’s revelation to his prophets: ‘Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he *revealeth* his secret unto his servants the prophets’ (Amos 3:7).”<sup>195</sup> Further, גלה denotes the uncovering/revealing of God, His arm, His majesty, His righteousness, and His word.<sup>196</sup> It is also used in announcements of judgment.<sup>197</sup> In the LXX it is used of “the judicial disclosure of man’s nature by God (*Gr. Sir.* 11:27).”<sup>198</sup> Through the process of revelation, there results an unveiling or uncovering so that the true character of the person, human or divine, is made known.

### ***The Fear of the LORD***

One last word could be identified in OT revelation, which is ירא (*yir*) “fear, be afraid; ni. be feared, revered, held in honor, worship.”<sup>199</sup> Broadly speaking, if revelation is the act of God, and perception and knowledge of God are the result, then “fear” could be considered the human response to that act.<sup>200</sup> For this reason Gilchrist’s comment is understandable when he writes, “‘Knowledge of God’ (*da<sup>c</sup>at ʾlōhîm*)<sup>201</sup> appears in parallel with ‘fear of the Lord’ (*yir<sup>o</sup> at YHWH* Isa 11:2; cf. 58:2; Jer 22:16) as a description of true religion.”<sup>202</sup> The LORD let Israel hear His voice “so they may learn to fear Me all the

<sup>195</sup> Waltke, *TWOT* 160. Cf. Prov 20:19 where the pair occur together again.

<sup>196</sup> Westermann and Albertz, *TLOT* 1:317; cf. God: Gen 35:6; 1 Sam 2:27; 3:21; Isa 22:14; His arm: Isa 53:1; His majesty: Isa 40:5; His righteousness: Isa 56:1; His word: 1 Sam 3:7.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.; cf. Hos 2:12; Nah 3:5; Ezek 16:37; 22:10; 23:10; Jer 13:22.

<sup>198</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:577. “An hour’s misery makes one forget past delights, and at the close of one’s life one’s deeds are revealed (*ἀποκάλυψις*)” (*Gr. Sir.* 11:27).

<sup>199</sup> Van Pelt and Kaiser, *NIDOTTE* 2:527–33.

<sup>200</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 26, says, “The human reaction to theophany in the Old Testament is one of fear.”

<sup>201</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 367, states, “Particularly distinctive is the prophetic concept of ‘knowledge of God’ (*da<sup>c</sup>at ʾlōhîm*) which is particularly prominent in Hosea (4:1, 6; 6:6; cf. Prov 2:5). Knowledge of God is derived from those outstanding historical events in which God has evidenced and has revealed himself to chosen individuals such as Abraham and Moses. These revelations are to be taught to others.”

<sup>202</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 367, continues, “The man who has a right relation with God confesses him and obeys him. To do justice and righteousness and to judge the cause of the poor and the needy is to know

days” (Deut 4:10). Fear of the LORD is equated with listening to and obeying the word of the LORD. Van Pelt and Kaiser note, “The fear of Yahweh associated with worship is characterized by obedience to his decrees and commandments (Ps 119:63).”<sup>203</sup> As such it is intimately connected with  $\text{יָדַע}$ , “to know, knowledge.”<sup>204</sup> Also, the connection to theophanic form is key since in theophany, the presence of the LORD brings human fear. As noted, the preeminent theophanic coming and presence of the LORD on Sinai brought experiential knowledge of the fear of the LORD to keep them from sin (Exod 20:20). Thus, proper reception of revelation means to obey it. By contrast, disobedience is the rejection of revelation.

### The Process of Revelation in History

Scholarship widely recognizes that revelation does not simply consist in communication of propositional information or in historical event.<sup>205</sup> Scholars affirm that there is some process by which revelation occurs, which is a mixture of these two elements as well as others. Fretheim writes,

Israel’s knowledge of God was received from various sources, each having its ultimate origin in the word of God. At the same time, this knowledge was always mediated in and through creaturely agents, whose imprint is always left on the end result. For the last century and more scholarly interest was focused primarily on divine revelation in and through historical events, particularly dramatic events such as the Exodus. This emphasis has now given way to a more comprehensive understanding of the vehicles in and through which Israel gained new knowledge of God.

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God (Jer 22:15–16). On the other hand where there is no knowledge of God there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery and breaking all bonds (Hos 4:1–2). Such will bring destruction upon a people (Hos 4:6; cf. Isa 5:13). Knowledge of God is more pleasing to him than sacrifice (Hos 6:6). The prophetic view of the messianic age is a time in which the knowledge of God covers the earth as water covers the sea (Hab 2:14; cf. Isa 11:9).”

<sup>203</sup> Van Pelt and Kaiser, *NIDOTTE* 2:527–33.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double Day, 1983), provides an excellent study of the various approaches to the doctrine of revelation; cf. Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 36; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:574; Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 6.

They include historical events, natural events, dreams, visions, theophanic encounters, creation/wisdom, encounters with strangers, individual and communal verbal communications, liturgical experience, and interactions with ANE literature and religion.<sup>206</sup>

Oepke notes the distinctiveness of OT revelation is most clearly expressed in its reference to the future as opposed to “the Greek idea of revelation, . . . refers to that which is at all times. . . . OT belief in revelation is directed to that which is to be.”<sup>207</sup>

Revelation is historical, but even in the transition from prophetic to apocalyptic, there is a strong note on historical occurrence:

The focus shifts [in apocalyptic literature] from the Word of demand, warning, interpretation and comfort to the actual disclosure of the future glory which already exists in hidden form in the counsel of God and the heavenly world. The more evil the course of this world, the more fervently hope is set on the time when Yahweh will enter upon His world dominion and show Himself to be the King of all peoples.<sup>208</sup>

Vos presents revelation as the interplay in history between act-revelation and word-revelation.<sup>209</sup> He states,

[R]evelation does not stand alone by itself, but is (so far as Special Revelation is concerned) inseparably attached to another activity of God, which we call *Redemption*. Now redemption could not be otherwise than historically successive, because it addresses itself to the generations of mankind coming into existence in the course of history. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in instalments as redemption does.<sup>210</sup>

Vos’ understanding is correct as far as he goes. Still, even this model is limited in that it

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<sup>206</sup> Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:604.

<sup>207</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:576, continues, “In this regard we are to think of the popular expectations of a coming age of salvation which were current in the Orient from ancient times. These expectations bear a predominantly transcendent character when they correspond to Utopian depictions of the original state of man. Prophecy, however, rejects sharply the unbroken natural optimism of these expectations. When the people speaks enthusiastically of the day of Yahweh, Amos sees that this will be a day of darkness and terror (5:18ff.). Yet this pitiless No does not prevent Amos and other prophets from crowning their warnings of judgment by intimations of a great and final age of salvation (Amos 9:11 ff.; Hos 2:16 ff.; Mic 4:1 ff.).”

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5–8.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

fails to discuss how other acts of the LORD, outside of redemption, are linked to revelation.

Revelation, and all acts of the LORD associated with it is to bring about the undeniable affirmation of His sovereignty. The criterion of undeniability is a significant one, but it is one that scripture repeatedly attests will occur.<sup>211</sup> For example, in Isa 41:20–21 the LORD says:

That they may see and recognize,  
And consider and gain insight as well,  
That the hand of the LORD has done this,  
And the Holy One of Israel has created it.  
“Present your case,” the LORD says.  
“Bring forward your strong *arguments*,”  
The King of Jacob says” – Isa 41:20–21.

In contrast the LORD challenges the false gods to do the same:

Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place;  
As for the former *events*, declare what they *were*,  
That we may consider them and know their outcome.  
Or announce to us what is coming;  
Declare the things that are going to come afterward,  
That we may know that you are gods;  
Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear  
together.  
Behold, you are of no account,  
And your work amounts to nothing;  
He who chooses you is an abomination. – Isa 41:22–24

Scripture declares that history will bring about the undeniable recognition and proof of the LORD’s presence and sovereignty.

Scripture provides its own formulation for demonstrating this level of assurance.<sup>212</sup> First, the word of the LORD “comes” (הָיָא *hāyā*) to a prophet (Deut 18:15–

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<sup>211</sup> Isaiah 41:20ff. ; cf. Cf. Isa 2:10–21; 19:21–23; 66:18–23; Zech 14:9, 16–21; Ps 8:6; cf. 1 Cor 15:23–28; Phil 2:9–11.

<sup>212</sup> Contra Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:603, who states, “The word of God is believed to be from God and sufficiently clear and effective to shape faith and life, but no criteria are available to demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that such speech had a divine origin.”

19), who then proclaims the word of the LORD to the people, and they are required to listen and obey (Deut 18:18–19). The LORD holds the people accountable to the word of the LORD spoken by the prophet whom the LORD raises up (Deut 18:18–19): “It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him.”<sup>213</sup> Second, historical events occur that directly correlate with the word of the LORD. If the word spoken through the prophet “does not come about or come true,” then that prophet is not of the LORD (Deut 18:22). Third, and finally, the prophet’s word must be in moral continuity with the previously revealed word of the LORD who has been previously revealed through His act of redemption (Deut 13:3–5).<sup>214</sup> When these three criteria are met the LORD holds the people to whom He gives the word of the LORD fully accountable to listen and obey that word. Each of these will be discussed.

### ***The “Coming” of the Word of the LORD***

First, the word of the LORD comes (הִיָּחַד) to a prophet who then proclaims that word to the people. The word predicts the future coming and intervention of the LORD in history.

Identifiable events are given though not necessarily within a precise sequence. S. Amsler comments,

[T]he prophets employ *hyh* in prophetic oracles to describe events embodying Yahweh’s personal intervention in judgment and grace: “For Gaza will be desolate” (Zeph 2:4); “Therefore your way will become a slippery path for you” (Jer 23:12); “And a pure street will be there” (Isa 35:8), etc. . . . One finds it frequently in Hos (6x), Mic (3x), Isa (28x), relatively less frequently in Jer (12x) and Ezek (29x); . . . . The emphasis of the prophetic statements lie on the unexpected, incredible, and yet

<sup>213</sup> Note the parallels between Moses and Jesus. This prophecy was attributed to Jesus by NT writers (cf. Acts 3:23; Heb 12:18–29).

<sup>214</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94, writes, “The test of a true prophet is that his words must come to pass (Deut 18:22). Of course, the words of a false prophet may also come true, and thus one must examine the theological content of the word as well (Deut 13:3).”

certain and real nature of the announced events. By multiplying par. statements with a plethora of images but without thoroughly describing the process, the prophets indicate that their *hyh* is not meant to express the precise course of events, but essentially the sovereign intervention of Yahweh in its various manifestations: “and it will come to pass in the coming days . . .” (Isa 2:2); “in that day it will come to pass . . .” (Isa 7:18, 21, 23, cf. v. 22). This intervention, both in judgment and in salvation, remains a wonder transcending the normal course of events and demonstrating the effectiveness of divine decision: “Truly, as I purposed, so did it come to pass (*hyh*), and what I decided come to be (*qûm*)” (Isa 14:24).<sup>215</sup>

The word of the LORD is therefore a declaration by the LORD of coming events, which, when they “come to pass” in history, provide evidence of the sovereign acting of the LORD in history.<sup>216</sup> Thus, the sovereignty of the Lord is revealed when His word is established in history, which only occurs when He comes and brings to pass those events prophesied by His word.

### ***The Occurrence of Historical Events in Accord with the Word of the LORD***

Second, after the word of the LORD is given, a period of time elapses before the predicted events come to pass. The LORD’s statement, “But by My name LORD, I did not make Myself known to them” (Exod 6:3), has generated confusion since He had in fact been called “LORD” or YHWH by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Gen 12:8; 21:33).<sup>217</sup> If, however, His name corresponds to His actions then this statement becomes clear. The context here is His declaration that He would redeem the nation from Egypt with an outstretched arm and with great judgments” (Exod 6:6). He would do this in order to take them for His people to be their God (v. 7), which is fulfillment of the word of the LORD

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<sup>215</sup> S. Amsler, “(היה) *hyh* to be,” *TLOT* 1:362. The word of the LORD is also a declaration for the LORD to be tested by His prophetic word (cf. Mal 3:10). So, the LORD provides His word in order for humans to gain experiential knowledge of Him.

<sup>216</sup> Martens, *TWOT* 94.

<sup>217</sup> See Walter C. Kaiser, “שם (*shēm*) name,” *TWOT* 934–35.

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>218</sup> He then says, “you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (v. 7). He links this action to His word to Abraham to give the land to His descendants (v. 8), which reveals His sovereignty through His actions in history.

The seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, both the captivity itself and the return after seventy years were completed were said to occur “to fulfill the word of the LORD.”<sup>219</sup> The fulfillment of this word of restoration would occur when the LORD visited His people (Jer 29:10). Daniel believed it would be literally fulfilled (Dan 9:2) in accord with the word of the LORD through Jeremiah (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10; Zech 7:5). This captivity was in direct fulfillment of the word of the LORD through the covenant curses (2 Chr 36:21; Lev 25:4, 5; 26:34–43). Again, His coming to enact His word through its historical fulfillment revealed that He is sovereign Lord of the covenant.

### ***Conformity of the Prophet’s Word with the God of Israel***

The third and final requirement for bringing about the recognition and undeniable proof of the LORD’s presence and sovereignty is that the word spoken by the prophet does not turn the people away from worshipping and fearing the LORD (Deut 13:1–5). If a canonical picture of revelation is considered, it is seen that the LORD’s redemption of Israel represents the foundation of all biblical revelation.<sup>220</sup> In that historical event He established the starting point, the foundation for all future revelation.

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<sup>218</sup> See esp. Gen 15:1–18.

<sup>219</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:21; Ezra 1:1; Dan 9:2; Jer 25:11, 12; Zech 7:5. This captivity was in direct fulfillment of the word of the LORD through the covenant curses (2 Chr 36:21; Lev 25:4, 5; 26:34–43).

<sup>220</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 18–19, 348, n. 9; A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (NovTSup 13; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 16; Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” *TDNT* 3:563.

It is not sufficient that prophets accurately predict the future, though it is a prerequisite (Deut 18:22). In addition to performing signs and wonders the prophet cannot counsel the people to depart from serving Yahweh, “who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk” (Deut 13:5).<sup>221</sup> Israel knows the LORD as the God who performed mighty wonders and brought them out of Egypt to worship the LORD at Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 3:12). In fact, the LORD comes to test His people by allowing false prophets to exist among the people.<sup>222</sup> Concerning those prophets whose sign or wonder comes true, but encourages the people to depart from the LORD, the LORD says, “you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 13:3).<sup>223</sup>

#### Verification of Revelation: The “Recognition Formula”

The word of the LORD finds its natural complement in what scholars call the “recognition formula.”<sup>224</sup> The importance of this concept will become clear in chapter three.

Throughout the OT, in response to the coming of the LORD in history, the phrase, “know that I am the LORD,” or a synonymous phrase appears.<sup>225</sup> Oepke writes, “When Pharaoh

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<sup>221</sup> Numerous times the LORD warns Israel to not listen to prophets that prophesy falsely in His name “for I have not sent them.” Cf. Jer 14:14; 23:21; 27:9, 14, 15; 28:15; 29:8–9.

<sup>222</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:574, notes, “We oversimplify if we regard the Israelite and the non-Israelite worlds as respective spheres of revelation and nonrevelation, of true revelation and false. On the one side God is not limited to Israel, and on the other we find the contrast between true and false revelation in Israel too.”

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Exod 20:20; Deut 8:2, 16; 1 Cor 11:19.

<sup>224</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, “יְהוָה,” *NIDOTTE* 2:413–14; Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:519–20; cf. Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366; cf. Block, “God and Magog in Ezekiel’s Eschatological Vision,” 95–97, 112–15.

<sup>225</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366, states, “In addition to knowledge of secular matters *yādaʿ* is also used of one’s relation to the divine, whether acquaintance with other gods (Deut 13:3, 7, 14) or with Jehovah (1 Sam 2:12; 3:7). The heathen do not know God (Jer 10:25) and neither does Israel, according to the prophets (Jer 4:22). The plagues of Egypt were sent so that the Egyptians might know that Jehovah is God (Exod

and his power resisted Yahweh, He revealed Himself overwhelmingly as the LORD of glory (“they shall know that I am Yahweh,” Exod 14:18).<sup>226</sup> Revelation is, therefore, grounded in the acts of the LORD in history:<sup>227</sup> “To you it was shown that you might know (יָדַעְתָּ) that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deut 4:35; cf. vv. 31–39). Fretheim writes,

The recognition formula, ‘know that I am the LORD’ (and variations, e.g., God’s name, Jer 16:21; God’s hand, Josh 4:24) is especially common in Ezek (71x), but has early prophetic roots (1 Kgs 20:13, 18) and is basic to the Exodus complex of events (Exod 6:7; 7:5; 14:14; 16:6; 29:46). The formula is usually preceded by a statement about what God has done or will do (12:15; 15:7), often with a following echo (33:29). These actions, whether in judgment (7:4; 14:8) or salvation (Isa 60:16; Ezek 37:6), confirm the identity of God; God thereby demonstrates before Israel and the nations that God is God and what kind of God he is. This is for the purpose of recognition by those who observe or participate in the event; the purpose is at times explicitly (Exod 14:4; Deut 4:35; Ezek 16:62–63. God even uses one who does not know God so that Israel may know (Isa 45:5–6).<sup>228</sup>

Schottroff notes that the recognition formula “describes human knowledge as the goal of divine self-revelation in historical acts” and “corresponds strictly to . . . Yahweh’s self-revelation.”<sup>229</sup> He further writes, “The recognition formula consistently combines the ‘statement of recognition’ *yad<sup>c</sup> ki* ‘know that’ (‘you will know that . . .’), usually appended as a result clause to a preceding announcement or mention of a particular divine activity, with some type of description of the content recognized.”<sup>230</sup> It also occurs in prophecy “with a view to impending events as a final element of the ‘proof saying,’ so called

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10:2, etc.). He will destroy (Ezek 6:7) and restore Israel so that they may know that he is God (Isa 60:16). The prophet Ezekiel, in particular, uses the phrase “that you may know” in his threats (Ezek 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 27, etc.).”

<sup>226</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:572, continues, “By this powerful action He drew Israel uniquely to Him out of all the nations (Exod 19:4 ff.). The prophets constantly refer to this fact (Amos 2:10; Hos 11:1 etc.; Jer 7:22; 32:20; cf. Deut 4:34 etc.).”

<sup>227</sup> Fretheim, *NIDOTTE* 2:410.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:413–14.

<sup>229</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:519.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

because of the occurrence of the recognition formula.<sup>231</sup> The importance of this observation is that the appearance of the recognition formula brings notice to the prophecy of a particular event to occur in the future. When the event occurs those who recognize its conformity with the prophetic word receive experiential knowledge and demonstrative proof.

The word of the LORD is linked to the recognition formula. The word of the LORD comes through His prophet to declare an act in history that will occur at the coming of the LORD. The recognition formula declares that true knowledge of the LORD will be revealed when that act comes to pass. Three principal things are revealed through the use of this combination: 1) verification of the word of the LORD; 2) the knowledge of the presence and power (i.e. sovereignty) of the LORD who by His coming brought to pass the events prophesied in the word of the LORD (Ezek 6:7),<sup>232</sup> and, 3) verification that the prophet who proclaimed the word of the LORD is a true prophet who had been sent by the LORD (Ezek 2:4–5).<sup>233</sup> The recognition formula appears as the goal of four main acts of the LORD when He comes: covenant, judgment, wrath, and sovereignty.

### ***The Recognition Formula in Covenant***

First, the recognition formula appears when the LORD comes to vindicate His covenant.

Since His word and His covenant are related concepts,<sup>234</sup> this element also applies to His

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 2:519–20, further notes, “Examples include 1 Kgs 20:13, 28, in connection with the promise of victory stemming from the Yahweh-war tradition, and esp. Ezekiel (Ezek 5:13; 6:7, 10, 13f.; 7:4, 9, 27, etc., a total of 78 times, mostly strict recognition formulae, over against 8 passages that exhibit the usage of *yaʿ* outside the formula), predominantly in connection with judgment sayings against Ezekiel’s own people, but also sayings that supersede announcements of judgment, such as Ezek 37:13; 39:28.”

<sup>232</sup> Numerous examples abound. See Isa 19:21; 37:20; 43:10; Ezek 5:13; 6:7, 10, 13, 14; *passim*.

<sup>233</sup> See also Zech 2:9, 11; 4:9; 6:15.

<sup>234</sup> See Jer 11:1–8; Ps 105:8–10.

coming to fulfill events according to the covenant. The curses of the Sinaitic covenant are historical and have historical fulfillment as well as the blessings and restoration.<sup>235</sup>

The formula also occurs to affirm the word of the LORD itself. When the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah to proclaim to the remnant of Jews living in Egypt who decided to go to Egypt, Jeremiah repeatedly declared “hear the word of the LORD” (44:24, 26), to which they refused (v. 16). Thus the LORD said, “Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good, and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will meet their end by the sword and by famine until they are completely gone” (v. 27). When the LORD destroys them, then those who have gone to Egypt “will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs” (v. 28). “This will be the sign to you, . . . so that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for harm” (v. 29).

### ***The Recognition Formula in Judgment***

Second, the recognition formula appears when the LORD comes to judge. One of many texts that could be cited is the word of the LORD of judgment against Jerusalem in Ezekiel 21. The formula occurs in v. 5, “Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return *to its sheath* again.” Cooper writes, “Because of the judgment described, all people, or literally “all flesh” (v. 5) will know that these judgments were of divine origin. . . . God will reveal himself in either blessing or judgment. He will bless the faithful and obedient and bring judgment upon the faithless and disobedient (cf. Deut 11:26–32; 28:1–29; 29).”<sup>236</sup> See also Isa 26:9: “For when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.”

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<sup>235</sup> Deuteronomy 28–30; Jer 29:10.

<sup>236</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 211.

The recognition formula appears when the LORD makes a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. This is particularly linked to the demonstration of His presence. In Exod 8:22 the LORD says, “But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.” In this plague, the LORD sets apart the place where His people are so that no plague reaches them. This distinction will be a “sign” (v. 23). Rather than being a single occurrence, the LORD regularly makes a distinction between His people and the wicked for the purpose of revelation.<sup>237</sup> In Malachi, the coming of the LORD in judgment on the day of the LORD is in view (3:1–5; 4:1–5). Those “who feared the LORD” were concerned of the wrath that was coming (Mal 3:16). To them the promise was made that “a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name” (v. 16). “‘They will be Mine,’ says the LORD of Hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him’” (v. 17). Why was this promise made? Verse 18 says, “So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”<sup>238</sup>

### ***The Recognition Formula in Wrath, Indignation, and Anger***

Third, the recognition formula appears when the LORD comes to execute His judgment in wrath, indignation and anger.<sup>239</sup> In the LORD’s wrath upon Israel during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the LORD says, “I execute judgments against you in anger,

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<sup>237</sup> Exodus 9:4–6; 10:23; 11:7; Mal 3:16–18.

<sup>238</sup> The distinction is also prevalent in Mal 4:1–3 where again the day of the LORD is coming, burning like a furnace. While it will set ablaze all the arrogant and evil doer, for those who fear the LORD’s name the sun of righteousness will rise” and they “will tread down the wicked . . . on the day” that He is “preparing.” Cf. Gen 18:25; Exod 9:4.

<sup>239</sup> Ezekiel 38:16, 23; Mal 2:4.

wrath and raging rebukes” (Ezek 5:15), which is followed by the LORD sending famine, wild beasts, plague and bloodshed, and a sword (vv. 16–17). Often the recognition formula appears when the LORD comes in wrath in which His righteousness is affirmed. After the plague of thunder, hail, and fire Pharaoh confessed, “I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones” (Exod 9:27). Likewise, upon the cessation of wrath the LORD is also revealed (cf. v. 29).

### ***The Recognition Formula in the Presence, Power, and Sovereignty of the LORD***

The formula also occurs when the LORD demonstrates His presence, power, and sovereignty.<sup>240</sup> In Exod 9:14, the LORD tells pharaoh that He is about to send all His plagues on pharaoh’s people “so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.” Until that time, the LORD showed restraint: “For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth” (Exod 9:15).<sup>241</sup> “But,” He says, “indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth” (v. 16).<sup>242</sup> The LORD prepares the wicked and raises them up for the purpose of showing His presence and power in His judgment and wrath upon them.<sup>243</sup> The judgment decree against Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 to humble him for seven years was “In order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men” (v. 17). To stress the point even more, the king would not be restored “until” he recognized “that

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<sup>240</sup> Exodus 8:22; Josh 3:10; Joel 3:17.

<sup>241</sup> Note the parallelism between the restraint of judgment here and that in Matt 24:22. Both events are occurring in the context of unparalleled wrath (compare Exod 9:18 with Matt 24:21; cf. Exod 9:23, 24).

<sup>242</sup> Exodus 8:10; Deut 3:24; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Chr 17:20; Ps 86:8; Isa 45:5–8; 46:9; Jer 10:6, 7. Also, the LORD’s acts in history are to make known His ownership of the earth: Exod 9:25.

<sup>243</sup> Proverbs 16:4; Rom 9:17; see esp. Rom 9:22, 27–29.

the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” (v. 25).

### Summary and Conclusion

The doctrine of revelation can be viewed in the broad or narrow view. In the narrow view, revelation is the effect, of which the coming of the LORD is the cause. Revelation is that which occurs when the LORD comes and acts in history as described by the language of presence-coming presented in Part 1.

This section also presented evidence that divine revelation is a process in history. In order to verify revelation as truly from the LORD several elements must occur. First, the word of the LORD comes to the prophet. Second, historical events occur in accord with the word. Finally, for revelation (and the prophet) to be verified as from the LORD, neither the revelation nor the prophet can teach the people to turn away from worshipping and fearing the LORD, who is the same LORD that has already been established by His past interventions in history for salvation. The LORD uses this process of verification to test the people whether they truly love and fear Him by allowing and even sending false prophets working signs and wonders to test the people.

### **Part 3–The Sovereignty of the LORD: The Purpose of His Coming**

The purpose of the coming of the LORD is to reveal the sovereignty of the LORD in history. The coming kingdom of God is central in OT Theology even though the metaphor “kingdom of God” does not appear in the Hebrew bible.<sup>244</sup> It is also rare in

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<sup>244</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17; Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7.

ST.<sup>245</sup> Scholars note that the idea that is being conveyed, the sovereignty of God, is a persistent and repeated theme in ST.<sup>246</sup> Beasley-Murray writes, in the OT, “[H]ope in the coming of the kingdom is hope in the coming of the Lord.”<sup>247</sup> The purpose, therefore, of the coming of the LORD is to reveal the fact of the sovereignty of the LORD. It is a statement of the sovereignty of the LORD. No human forces the LORD to come, act, or reveal Himself.<sup>248</sup> History is moving to the full revelation of the LORD’s sovereignty which is portrayed as the manifestation of His glory (כְּבוֹד) throughout the world.

Gerhard Von Rad succinctly writes,

[T]he כְּבוֹד of God is also a theme of religious hope and an established part of eschatological expectation. This is a usage which at an essential point links up with the strict theological usage of P and Ezek; we are here concerned with a manifestation, not so much of the intrinsic nature of God, but of the final actualisation of His claim to rule the world. The poetic exaggeration of Isa that the whole earth is full of the כְּבוֹד of Yahweh (Isa 6:3, cf. Num 14:21) is more often formulated as a hope: all lands shall be full of His כְּבוֹד (Ps 72:19); or, in the refrain, “let thy כְּבוֹד be above all the earth” (Ps 57:5, 11); then shall all the nations see the כְּבוֹד of Yahweh, and Tubal and Javan shall declare it to the Gentiles (Isa 66:18 f.); indeed, the whole task of Deutero-Isa is to prepare the way that Yahweh’s כְּבוֹד may be revealed (Isa 40:5). The saving act to which these eschatological statements refer is finally so embracing that the colours merge into one another and it makes little difference whether it is said that Yahweh will become כְּבוֹד for Israel or that Israel is created for Yahweh’s כְּבוֹד (Zech 2:9; Isa 43:7).<sup>249</sup>

Beasley-Murray also writes,

The significance of this event [Covenant at Sinai] for the development of Israel’s thought about the future is apparent. Israel’s unique achievement of an eschatology in relation to history was conditioned by the uniqueness of the revelation it experienced, the covenant into which it entered, and the

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<sup>245</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 79; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 19; On page 74, he notes that he is “using the terms *kingdom* and *sovereignty* interchangeably.”

<sup>248</sup> Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 22; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:565, writes, “He is the God of mystery who reveals Himself only when He wills to do so.”

<sup>249</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, “δόξα,” *TDNT* 2:241–42.

history in which it was set and to which the whole complex gave rise. From the events at Sinai onward, the tribes were a group on the march under Yahweh; . . . . In later times the Exodus was understood as being inextricably bound up with the possession of the promised land, the whole process constituting a manifestation of Yahweh's presence with and working for his people.<sup>250</sup>

The full manifestation of the sovereignty of the LORD is the purpose for which the LORD acts; therefore, it provides the purpose for the coming of the LORD.

There is no question that the LORD has always been and always will be sovereign.<sup>251</sup> He is the one who raises up and wipes out kings and kingdoms.<sup>252</sup> The only question is one of concealed versus revealed sovereignty. Moore succinctly writes,

The contrast between the kingship of JHWH acknowledged by Israel's 'prophets' in the present, and that to which they look forward in the future, is essentially a contrast between concealed and revealed kingship. Kingship as a characteristic or attribute of JHWH could not be thought of as at one time partial, and later complete; the contrast could only be between present hiddenness and future manifestation. Already through the covenant relationship JHWH's sovereign rule was manifested; but the manifestation was clouded by the partiality of Israel's response, and the sphere of the relationship was in any case limited to Israel. The expected revelation would involve an open recognition by all.<sup>253</sup>

The LORD's sovereignty is currently concealed due to the failure of both Israel and the nations to obey Him.<sup>254</sup> The LORD's coming is intended to bring about universal acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the LORD as well as universal worship, and fear of the LORD. The manifestation of the sovereignty of the LORD is expected in the OT in the judgment of both Israel and the nations. But only through their obedience, which will come through the coming of the LORD in salvation can the LORD be fully manifested as

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<sup>250</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 18–19, 348, n. 9.

<sup>251</sup> Note Rev 1:8 in the context of sovereignty: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty."

<sup>252</sup> Daniel 2:19–20.

<sup>253</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 16; cf. Jer 31:34; Isa 2:2.

<sup>254</sup> See the failure of Israel in Isaiah 1; Jeremiah 11; 22:9; Hab 1:1–4; Mic 1:2–7; and failure of the nations in Isa 24:5; 33:8; Ezek 28:2.

sovereign; therefore, both judgment on rebellion and salvation unto obedience is proclaimed in scripture. Moore writes,

Israel's hope in the final manifestation of God's sovereignty involved the expectation both of judgment and of vindication. To recognize God as righteous meant drawing the conclusion that all iniquity must fall under his judgment. Amos (5:18) fulminates against the failure to take this fact seriously. Social injustice (cf. 5:11ff. and Isa 3:15; 5:8, etc.) and idolatry (cf. Amos 5:23; Isa 2:17f. etc.) cannot be set aside by mere religious conformity (Amos 5:22) but must lead to the revelation of God's judgment upon them (Isa 2:12). Therefore the expected intervention of God in Israel's history would not simply involve the exaltation of Israel and the destruction of her enemies, but would include judgment upon *Israel*.<sup>255</sup>

J. Robert Vannoy concurs when he writes, "The root metaphor underlying Yahweh's role as Judge and Warrior is his kingship and royal authority. So ultimately the vengeance of God is his action as divine King in implementing his sovereign rule over those who defile his majesty by violating his honor, his law, or his people."<sup>256</sup> Scripture proclaims that there will come a day in history when the LORD is manifest to all as the King.<sup>257</sup>

Despite the prophecies of coming judgment, there still remained hope and expectation of the LORD's promise to bless and redeem His people.<sup>258</sup> Despite the Exile, Israel still maintained the notion of the sovereignty of the LORD, even if during the Exile that sovereignty was expressed through judgment.<sup>259</sup> Revelation of the sovereignty of the LORD occurs in history when He comes through a complex of events including covenant administration, judgment, wrath, and salvation. Moore writes,

[T]he future contains the key to the present and the past: all the equivocation would one day be put to an end through the divine intervention in history for the sake of manifesting the Kingship of God. In judgment and blessing he would manifest his Lordship, and this would

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<sup>255</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 14.

<sup>256</sup> J. Robert Vannoy, "Retribution: Theology of," *NIDOTTE* 4:1148.

<sup>257</sup> Isaiah 52:7-10; Zech 14:9; Mic 4:7.

<sup>258</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 14-15.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

involve a total transformation of the present situation, hence the picture of world renewal enhanced sometimes by the idea of an entirely supernatural realm.<sup>260</sup>

More important for the present thesis is an examination of how the coming of the LORD in judgment and wrath reveals the sovereignty of the LORD.

### The Coming of the LORD in Judgment Reveals His Sovereignty

The coming of the LORD in judgment demonstrates His sovereignty and is the voluntary act of God.<sup>261</sup> To be sovereign, the LORD must judge sin and be victorious over his enemies, those in rebellion against Him within history. E. Jenni writes,

The attainment of the dominion of God demands victory over the enemies of Yahweh by those faithful to him, not only in the cosmic (Isa 27:1) but also in the historical realms (Isa 10:24–27). Yahweh sits in judgment over all that is ungodly, not in blind wrath, but to destroy sin: over the foreign gods (Zeph 2:11), over the heathen nations (Jer 25:15 ff.; Ezek 25–32), but also over the sins of his own people (Hos 4:1–2; Mic 6:1 ff.) and some of its representatives (Jer 11:21–23; 20:1–6).<sup>262</sup>

Here, Jenni uses “judgment” in the general sense as “the punishing and destroying intervention of God,” as opposed to the “narrower sense” as “forensic action.” Niehaus writes, “The idea that God judged his people for their covenant trespasses in the Old Testament does not need elaboration.”<sup>263</sup> Divine judgment is historical, meaning that it occurs through the course of historical events.<sup>264</sup> When the appointed natural vehicles of divine punishment and justice, i.e. human judicial system and government, fail to

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 25–26.

<sup>261</sup> E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *IDB* 2:128.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 2:127.

<sup>263</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 108.

<sup>264</sup> For example, Robert D. Culver, “𐤑𐤍𐤔 (shāpat) judge, govern,” *TWOT* 948, says that 𐤑𐤍𐤔 can mean “judgment in the penal sense, i.e. punishment. In several cases the punishments are divine punishments. The plagues of Egypt are divine *sh<sup>e</sup>pāṭîm* (Exod 6:6; 7:4; 12:12). God punished Jerusalem with sword, famine, evil beasts and pestilences, all called God’s ‘four . . . *sh<sup>e</sup>pāṭîm* (Ezek 14:21). *sh<sup>e</sup>pāṭîm* inflicted by men may be divine punishments (Ezek 16:41; cf. v. 38). Civil magistrates’ punishments of breakers of human laws are also called *sh<sup>e</sup>pāṭîm* (Prov 19:29).”

righteously administer justice, the judgment of God comes through direct historical intervention and retribution.<sup>265</sup>

### ***Retribution at the Coming of the LORD***

David Penchansky defines retribution as, “God gives to individuals and communities a degree of suffering that somehow corresponds to their sin or offense.” He continues, “The idea of retribution serves as a corner-stone for the central theological claim that God governs the world with justice.”<sup>266</sup> The LORD is righteous and His retribution is “a fundamental assumption” of the OT.<sup>267</sup> It has already been argued that judgment occurs at the presence-coming of the LORD, which refers to His direct intervention in history. Retribution, then, occurs at the presence-coming of the LORD.

Contrary to this notion, Klaus Koch has argued that retribution in the OT is accomplished “internally” via the LORD working through the course of events to ensure that individuals “reap what they sow.”<sup>268</sup> Instead, there is an intrinsic relation between a person’s deeds and their fate. A person’s destiny is dependent upon Yahweh working within the events to ensure the outcome of their lives is in accord with their deeds. Koch calls this the “Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang” or “act-consequence-relationship.” Vannoy describes this idea saying, “God works from within, ensuring the completion of the process, rather than externally as a judge.”<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Anders Runesson, “Judgment [דִּין *din*, מִשְׁפָּט *mishpat*, רִיב *riv*, שִׁפּוּט *shipput*; κρίμα *krima*, κρίσις *krisis*],” *NIDB* 3:458.

<sup>266</sup> David Penchansky, “Retribution,” *NIDB* 4:781–82.

<sup>267</sup> Vannoy, *NIDOTTE* 4:1140, writes, “Because God is consistently viewed in the OT as a personal being who is righteous in all that he does, an appropriate correlation between human behavior and its ensuing reward or punishment is a fundamental assumption of OT literature.”

<sup>268</sup> Klaus Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?” *ZKT* 52 (1955), 1–42.

<sup>269</sup> Vannoy, *NIDOTTE* 4:1141.

Scholars are in wide agreement that while there is an aspect of built-in consequences for deeds, there is ample evidence that retribution occurs through the direct intervention of the LORD.<sup>270</sup> Instead, retribution is most often and fully viewed as a direct intervention by God to impose blessing or punishment.<sup>271</sup> Vannoy notes, “In general, it may be concluded that Koch’s theory is too sweeping to do justice to numerous OT texts that represent Yahweh as intervening in various situations to impose blessing or punishment in his role as divine warrior and judge (cf. e.g., Deut 7:10; 1 Sam 24:19[20]; Prov 12:2; 15:25). The theory ultimately restricts God’s freedom to act and implies a deistic view of God, which is quite foreign to the OT.”<sup>272</sup>

While there certainly are built-in consequences to immoral behavior, the OT portrays the coming of the LORD in retribution as an active working of his intervention in history. Schottroff argues,

[T]he intensity of Yahweh’s involvement with people and their deeds expressed by *pqd* as well as the characteristics of his intervention described by *pqd* markedly exceed a participation merely of the type and for the purpose of pushing “an action . . . on toward its conclusion” (Koch, “Retribution,” 73). This broader concept is indicated not only by the remaining terms that parallel *pqd* such as *zkr* “to remember” (Jer 14:10; Hos 8:13; 9:9), *yd<sup>c</sup>* “to perceive, pay attention to” (Job 35:15), and *nqm* hitp. “to avenge oneself” (Jer 5:9, 29; 9:8), . . . .<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.; Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 27; ed. by J. Crenshaw. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 134.

<sup>271</sup> Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets*, 134, writes concerning prophetic texts, “one cannot fully express the relationship between sin and judgment as one of the fate-effecting deed under the guidance of God. While a number of passages do not clarify the issue one way or another, there are several which emphasize the idea of correspondence but not consequence and suggest that while there is always a causal effect in the relationship between someone or some people’s actions and the judgment they receive, that relationship is not necessarily internal but is perceived as resting in the divine decision and not happening apart from the decision or decree.” Cf. Vannoy, *NIDOTTE* 4:1141.

<sup>272</sup> Vannoy, *NIDOTTE* 4:1141.

<sup>273</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1026–27.

Scripture likewise affirms that the LORD Himself comes in judgment and in His coming those to whom He is coming will personally meet God (Amos 4:12).<sup>274</sup>

Scripture portrays retribution as the LORD coming to render to each person according to deeds.<sup>275</sup> In judgment, a person is rendered according to their deeds when the judge's sentence matches the deed. The LORD, the Judge, repeatedly makes statements such as, "I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations," and "I will repay you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst; then you will know that I, the LORD, do the smiting" (Ezek 7:8–9).<sup>276</sup>

#### The Coming of the LORD in Wrath Reveals His Sovereignty

Wrath is related to judgment in that wrath is the execution of judgment (cf. Ezek 5:8–17) and as such is a demonstration of the LORD's sovereignty.<sup>277</sup> The actual word "wrath" (קֶשֶׁפ, *qesep*) is used in parallel with numerous other words expressing the same basic concept of divine wrath including "indignation" (זָעַם, *zā'am*)<sup>278</sup> "anger" (אַף, *ap*),<sup>279</sup> fury and burning anger.<sup>280</sup> Leon Wood writes, "zā'am is used in parallel with *qāšap*, as Jeremiah states that the earth shall tremble at God's wrath (*qesep*), and the nations shall not be able to bear his 'indignation' (*zā'am*) (Jer 10:10; cf. Ps 102:11)."<sup>281</sup>

Wrath is principally historical as opposed to eternal. There is only minimal

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<sup>274</sup> E. Jenni, *IDB* 2:127; Cf. Lev 20:5; Deut 18:19.

<sup>275</sup> Schottroff, *TLOT* 2:1026–27.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Isa 35:4; 59:18; Jer 16:18; 17:10; 21:14; 32:18–19; Ezek 7:8–9; 33:20; 36:19; Hos 4:9; 8:13; 9:9; Ps 62:12, *passim*.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Runesson, *NIDB* 3:459–60.

<sup>278</sup> Leon J. Wood, "זָעַם (*zā'am*) be indignant, express indignation, denounce," *TWOT* 247.

<sup>279</sup> G. Sauer, "אַף (*ap*) anger," *TLOT* 1:166–69.

<sup>280</sup> Isaiah 9:19; 10:6; 13:9, 13; 42:25.

<sup>281</sup> Wood, *TWOT* 247.

evidence of eternal wrath in the OT.<sup>282</sup> By contrast, wrath in the OT is historically fulfilled in sword, famine, pestilence, beast, desolation,<sup>283</sup> and constitutes the principal warning of the prophets.<sup>284</sup> As a historical activity of God, wrath is also covenantal in that curses for covenant infidelity are historical events such as sword, famine, plague, captivity, confusion (28:20; cf. Deut 28:15ff.). Van Groningen writes,

In various places where *hēmā* appears it refers to God's reaction to his unfaithful covenant people (Deut 9:19; Jer 42:18). God is aroused to great heat because he, as a jealous God, sees the people he loves disobey him and appeal to, or consort with, sinners or "no gods." He then expresses his rage or pours out his fury (Ezek 36:6). Other nations who violate his intentions and Word, also experience God's displeasure by the pouring out of God's fury (Jer 10:25; Nah 1:2, 6). God's indignations and fury are abated and appeased when he has poured them out in judgment (Jer 42:18). Remorse and repentance would not avert it (2 Kgs 22:13–17). However, Phinehas, jealous with God's jealousy, having killed the lawbreaker, did turn God's heat away from Israel (Num 25:11). The point seems clear, once God is provoked to *hēmā*, satisfaction of some kind must be made by the execution of judgment upon the cause of it.<sup>285</sup>

The ST largely follows the OT understanding though, with the rise of personal eschatology, the eternal element begins to be emphasized.<sup>286</sup> Runesson writes, "There is no evidence of individual judgment after death in the OT, except in relation to final judgment in Daniel 12."<sup>287</sup> This emphasizes the point that in the OT, judgment and wrath were temporal and historical rather than eternal. Wrath falls on Israel by the nations who

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<sup>282</sup> Isaiah 66:24. Jesus quotes this text in Mark 9:44 to speak of the eternal wrath of Gehenna, the lake of fire (cf. Rev 19:20; 20:10).

<sup>283</sup> Ezekiel 5:12; 7:15.

<sup>284</sup> Gerard Van Groningen, "הַקֶּזֶפַּי (*qesep*) wrath," *TWOT* 808, writes, "Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Chronicler and Zechariah either warn of or speak about the righteous wrath of God coming upon his unfaithful covenant people."

<sup>285</sup> Van Groningen, *TWOT* 375.

<sup>286</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 43–48.

<sup>287</sup> Runesson, *NIDB* 3:459, continues, "Final judgment in the OT is not related to life after death; it is about life after God's victory in history, which will affect, according to one text (Daniel), even those who have died before this happens."

are then judged and punished for their sins against Israel.<sup>288</sup> The future day of wrath, then, speaks about historical events in which the LORD punishes the world for its sins through temporal and historical events. This wrath is temporal and historical as distress, tribulation, and suffering.

### ***Revelation Due to the Wrath of the LORD***

It is noteworthy that immediately before and after the oft-quoted phrase on the revelation of God (Deut 29:29), there are written statements concerning the outpouring of covenantal wrath and curses upon those who are unfaithful to the words of the law (cf. 29:27). The prophets' proclamations of coming wrath were in accordance with the curses written in the book of the Law. While the recognition formula is used in all the prophets, it is most prevalent in Ezekiel. Throughout the book the personal intervention by the LORD to pour out wrath and indignation is intermixed with the recognition statement as well as indicators of a personal coming to inflict that wrath. The LORD Himself will bring/inflict (Ezek 6:3, 10, 14) wrath (Ezek 6:11–12), which is defined as a sword, famine, and plague (Ezek 6:11–12), and will result in recognition of the LORD (vv. 7, 10, 13, 14). By the LORD's coming He will execute judgment (Ezek 5:8, 10, 15; 11:9; 16:41) and wrath (Ezek 5:15). Despite Israel's deserving of complete destruction, a remnant will be left (Ezek 6:8).<sup>289</sup> Those who escape will remember the Lord, mourn and loathe themselves for all their abominations, and "then they will know that I am the LORD; I

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 3:458, writes, "God's judgment as direct intervention in history is present in the idea that the military power of foreign nations will be used to punish Israel for having abandoned justice and broken the agreements of the covenant (Isa 5:24–30). However, the nations will also be punished for their wrongdoings against Israel (Joel 3:1–21 [Heb. 4:1–21]; Jdt 16:17)."

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Isaiah 6:13; Jer 30:11.

have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them” (Ezek 6:8–10). Van Groningen writes,

So, whenever God reveals his wrath, he always manifests his own “unsearchable greatness.” It must be that his wrath is expressed in harmony with his justice. The guilt due to lawbreaking must be dealt with according to the just demands of the law (Deut 29:13). However, the working out of God’s wrath is tempered by his grace and mercy. In fact, it is in the midst of wrath that God may reveal his mercy (Hab 3:2), manifesting and bestowing his grace upon guilty sinners (Gen 3:15).<sup>290</sup>

The occurrence of the recognition statement as a result of the acts of the LORD in history, in accordance with His word demonstrates that revelation of the sovereignty of the LORD occurred through His coming.<sup>291</sup>

### ***Revelation Due to Retribution***

The model phrase for retribution occurs in some variation of repayment according to their deeds. This repayment occurs within history as evidenced by the historical events that occur as repayment for covenantal transgressions. Ezekiel 7:24–27 ties together 1) sovereign divine action in directing events of wrath (v.24); 2) theophanic imagery of fear (v. 25, 27); 3) numerous events such as disaster, rumor, seeking after prophetic vision and counsel (v. 26); 4) mourning; 5) affirmation that these events are retribution (v. 27); and, 6) the recognition formula (v. 27).

Examination of the entire chapter evinces more of the same. Cooper writes, “Again the purpose of this judgment was to bring a new knowledge of God (v. 4).”<sup>292</sup> As the LORD’s chosen nation, Israel serves a unique place in the plan of God for the revelation of His character. Wrath upon national Israel serves as a witness to the nations

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<sup>290</sup> Van Groningen, *TWOT* 808.

<sup>291</sup> The recognition formula regularly appears as a result of the coming of the LORD to pour out wrath. Cf. Lam 4:11, 22; Ezek 5:13, 15; Wrath as sword, famine, plague, beasts, etc.: Ezek 5:12; 7:15.

<sup>292</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 111.

of God's righteousness and power<sup>293</sup> just as their ultimate salvation serves as witness to His mercy.<sup>294</sup> The LORD tells Israel that when wrath comes upon them due to their sin, "you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deut 28:25), and, "You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the LORD drives you" (v. 37). Yet, when He comes to deliver them, they will mourn over their sin then they ". . . will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel" (Ezek 20:43, 44).

### Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of the coming of the LORD is to reveal the sovereignty of the LORD in history. The LORD has always been and always will be sovereign; however, He acts in history to manifest that sovereignty. The manifestation of His sovereignty occurs when He comes to enact covenant stipulations, both for retribution against covenant breakers as well as salvation. Just as the LORD's actions in the past, according to His covenant, brought about the revelation of His sovereignty so also will His coming to intervene in the future also bring about the revelation of His sovereignty. This future coming to intervene will occur on the eschatological day of the LORD, which will be examined next.

### **Part 4—The Day of the LORD: The Time of His Coming**

Unlike the theme of the coming of the LORD, the phrase "the day of the LORD" (יום יהוה),

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<sup>293</sup> Ezekiel 5:8; 16:41.

<sup>294</sup> Ezekiel 16:62; 20:41; 36:23, 36.

*yom YHWH*), its origin, and its importance in eschatology have been extensively studied.<sup>295</sup> The disproportionate importance that scholars have laid upon the term with respect to the coming of the LORD is somewhat surprising considering the actual locution of the phrase the “day of the LORD,” *yom YHWH* (יום יהוה) occurs only sixteen times, and only in the prophets.<sup>296</sup> The phrase occurs with some minor modifications an additional eleven times.<sup>297</sup> The phrase is absent in ST,<sup>298</sup> though the similar phrase “day of God” appears rarely.<sup>299</sup> Likewise, the NT use of the specific phrase is limited.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>295</sup> A. Joseph Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” *JBL* 93 (1974), 329, notes that while it has long been acknowledged as central in OT prophecy, there is not similar agreement on its nature or character. There are four main origin theories that have been presented: 1) Sigmund Mowinckel, understood the term within the history of Israel’s cult as the enthronement of Yahweh; 2) Von Rad, “The Origin of the Day of Yahweh,” 97–108, understood the term within the historical traditions of holy war, pure war, an event involving the appearance of Yahweh to destroy his enemies; 3) F. Charles Fensham, “A Possible Origin of the Concept of the Day of the Lord,” *Biblical Essays* (Bepeck, S. Africa: Potchefstroom Herald, 1966), 90–97, understood the term within the background of covenant traditions and the execution of treaty curses (Isaiah 13, 34, Ezekiel 7, Joel 2); 4) Weiss, “The Origin of the ‘Day of the Lord’—Reconsidered,” 29–60, understood the term within the ancient motif-complex of the theophany of description. Cf. Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology,” 3–19; “The Day of the Lord and the Seventieth Week of Daniel,” 131–42; “The Day of the Lord and the Rapture,” 259–70; “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18,” 387–401.

<sup>296</sup> Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7 [4], 14 (twice); and Mal 4:5 [3:23].

<sup>297</sup> “*Yom laYHWH*: a day for the LORD (יום ליהוה) in 3 texts: Isa 2:12; Ezek 30:3; Zech 14:1; the day of the wrath of the LORD (יום עִבְרַת יְהוָה) in 2 texts: Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:18; the day of the LORD’s anger (יום אַף־יְהוָה) in 3 texts: Zeph 2:2, 3; Lam 2:22; the day of His fierce anger (בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ) once: Lam 1:12; the day of His anger (בְּיוֹם אַפּוֹ) once: Lam 2:1; the day of the LORD’s sacrifice (יום זֶבַח יְהוָה) once: Zeph 1:8. Other closely related terms include: “A day of vengeance” (Jer46:10); “a day of vengeance for the Lord” (Isa 34:8); “the day of vengeance for our God” (Isa 61:2).

<sup>298</sup> Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” 330, notes that “. . . specific locutions of the Day of Yahweh are found only in the writings of the classical prophets and in the book of Lamentations. Specific references to the concept simply do not appear apart from the prophetic material to give textual verification to any of the origin theories.” Cf. Weiss, “The Origin of the ‘Day of the Lord’—Reconsidered,” 41; David Emory Lanier, “The Day of the Lord in the New Testament: A Historical and Exegetical Analysis of Its Background and Usage” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 154.

<sup>299</sup> E. Jenni, “Day of the Lord,” *IDB* 1:785, writes, “In the late Jewish literature, which no longer uses the name Yahweh, the expression “day of the Lord” disappears, but not the idea it expresses—the day of the great last judgment at the end of this aeon. Only rarely is there any mention of the Day of God in continuation of the old terminology (2 Bar. 48:47; 49:2: ‘Thy day,’ 55:6: ‘day of the Mighty One’); also, expressions such as ‘day of the Messiah’ and the like have scarcely come into use.”

<sup>300</sup> The specific locution is found only in Acts 2:20; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10; however, related statements are more numerous and are applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, e.g. 1 Cor 1:8. Cf. Darrell Bock, “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in *The Bible Knowledge Word Study* (Bible Knowledge Series; Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries, 2006), 207, writes, “(*hēmera*)—This expression is appropriated by Paul (and other NT authors) from the OT (Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20; Obad 15; Mal 4:1–6). However “Lord” no longer refers generally to Yahweh (the personal OT name of God) but specifically to Jesus Christ. In the OT, this “day” is a time in which God will intervene and act in judgment

Despite the limited occurrence of the specific phrase, there is no question that the day of the LORD (DL) theme is a significant theme of eschatological prophecy. The problem is that scholars have elevated this theme above the coming of the LORD as the controlling eschatological concept. Beasley-Murray agrees with the primacy of the coming of the LORD when he writes, “It is likely that in Israel’s traditions the theophany concept was primary and the Day of the LORD a specialized application of it.”<sup>301</sup> As a result, the coming of the LORD, which is the more comprehensive biblical and eschatological theme, has been left to relative obscurity. This oversight has led to a number of problems, the most important of which for the current debate is the belief that the future tribulation is not part of the DL, but occurs prior to it.<sup>302</sup> It is argued that the DL occurs only after tribulational events such the coming of Elijah (Mal 4:5) and cosmic portends (Joel 2:30–31).<sup>303</sup> Because the DL and the coming of the Lord are equated then the coming of the Lord must occur after the final tribulation.

In contrast to this view, “the day of the LORD” is better understood as a non-technical description of any period of time initiated by the coming of the LORD. It is not that the LORD comes when the day of the LORD arrives, as if the time dictated the action of the LORD; instead, the time period when the LORD comes to act is recognized as the

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and/or blessing (Isa 1:6–9; Joel 2–3; Zeph 1:7; 1:14–23; Mal 4:1–6). Paul uses this and related expressions (1 Cor 3:12–15; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) to refer to “the day of God’s final judgment” (BAGD, 347, 3bβ; BDAG, 438, 3bβ) associated with Christ’s return (v. 7; Phil 1:6, 10; 1 Thess 5:23–24).”

<sup>301</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 16. On p. 15 he identifies theophany with the coming of God.

<sup>302</sup> For a well-supported argument for this view, see Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 201–12.

<sup>303</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 203; Cf. Isa 13:10; 24:23; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15f; Amos 5:20; 8:9; Zeph 1:15; Matt 24:29–31; Acts 2:20; Rev 6:12–17; 8:12.

day of the LORD.<sup>304</sup> It is an attribute or name of any period in which the LORD demonstrates His sovereignty through His intervention in history. It is a Hebrew idiomatic phrase that describes a larger, more comprehensive theme. The most important aspect of the DL theme for the present thesis is that it indicates that the coming of the LORD is not a momentary event, but an extended period of time.

#### Lexical Analysis: The Meaning of “Day” (יֹמַי *yôm*) and “Time” (עֵת *‘ēt*)

Scholars of the present debate are virtually united in affirming that the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord are synonymous,<sup>305</sup> though there is usually little discussion on how or why this is true.<sup>306</sup> The reason why the two are, and even can be, equated is found by understanding the Hebraic conception of “day” and “time.” First, the Hebrew word for “day” (יֹמַי *yôm*), while often referring to a literal twenty-four hour day,<sup>307</sup> is not strictly limited to this definition. Depending upon context, the word can denote: 1) the period of light as contrasted with a period of darkness; 2) twenty-four hours; 3) an indefinite “time;”<sup>308</sup> 4) a point in time; or, 5) a year (in the plural, cf. 1 Sam 27:7; Exod 13:10).<sup>309</sup> Another writer defines “day” in one of its senses as “the period of an action or

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<sup>304</sup> That the coming of the LORD is primary is clearly seen in Mal 3:1–5 where the LORD’s coming (v. 1) and acting (vv. 2–5) is the focus on the day of His coming (v. 2). The repeated references to the day of the LORD in Malachi 4 merely point back to 3:1–5 when He comes to act in judgment and refinement of His people.

<sup>305</sup> Those in the current debate hold this view. See Alan Hultberg, “Conclusion,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 275. Other scholars likewise equate the two. See Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 12, 69–74; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 3, 11; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 15, writes, “The Day of the Lord is the day of the coming of God.”

<sup>306</sup> Two scholars in particular have provided helpful guidance on this issue. First, Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 3–16, has exegetically linked the two by drawing together imagery and direct references from both the OT and NT; however, there is no discussion of how a unit of time, “day,” can be equated with a unit of action, “coming.” Second, Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 11–16, provides the necessary analysis of the Hebrew language concerning time, some of which is included here.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Pieter A. Verhoef, (יֹמַי) (*yôm* I) daylight, day (24 hours), eschatological day, today, *NIDOTTE* 2:419–424.

<sup>308</sup> It could be added that the NT interprets the day of the LORD as a thousand years (Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8).

<sup>309</sup> L. C. Coppes, “יֹמַי (*yôm*) day, time, year,” *TWOT*, 370.

state of being.”<sup>310</sup> It could refer to “one’s lifetime or reign,” which is expressed as in “his ‘days.’”<sup>311</sup> Coppes states that יום “is the most important concept of time in the OT by which a point of time as well as a sphere of time can be expressed.”<sup>312</sup> Significantly, the NT shares this flexibility in meaning. Following Ps 90:4, Peter declares, “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” (2 Pet 3:8).

It was also customary in Semitic understanding to associate “day” with important events that occurred during the period referenced.<sup>313</sup> Boman says, “time is something qualitative” for the Hebrews, “because for them it is determined by content.”<sup>314</sup> Beasley-Murray has noted that when “day” (יום) is followed by the genitive it refers to an event or calamity that occurred to the one named.<sup>315</sup> This usage is seen in texts such as “the day of battle” (Ps 140:7<sup>316</sup>) and “the day of Jezreel” (Hos 1:11<sup>317</sup>).<sup>318</sup> In Isa 9:4 the NASB translates “the day (יום) of Midian” as “the battle of Midian,” which referred to the event of Gideon’s victory over Midian (Judg 7:19–25). The siege and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem is called “the day of Jerusalem” (Ps 137:7). Note also phrases such as “the day

<sup>310</sup> S. J. De Vries, “Day,” *IDB* 1:783.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Gen 26:1; 1 Kgs 10:21; cf. Heb 5:7. De Vries continues, “There is a ‘day of trouble’ (Ps 20:1), a ‘day of God’s wrath’ (Job 20:28), the messianic day (John 8:56), a ‘day of salvation’ (2 Cor 6:2), and an ‘evil day’ (Eph 6:13). A day in this sense can be the time of a notable battle, judgment, disaster, or deliverance (Deut 16:3; Ps 137:7; Isa 9:4; Ezek 30:9; etc.)”

<sup>312</sup> Coppes, *TWOT*, 370.

<sup>313</sup> G. M. Burge, “Day of Christ, God, the Lord,” *EDT* (2d. ed. Baker Reference Library), 319, continues, “These could be decisive events in Israel’s history (the day of Jerusalem’s destruction, Ps 137:7) or random events which took on symbolic value (the day of trouble, Ps 77:2). Among Israel’s prophets the term often took on an eschatological tenor describing a future climactic day of judgment (the day of the LORD of hosts, Isa 2:12). This day of the LORD was anticipated by Israel as a future day of Yahweh’s visitation.” Cf. E. Jenni, “Day of the Lord; Day of God,” *IDB* 1:784–85.

<sup>314</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 137; cf. 141, 143; See synopsis of the discussion of the Hebrew notion of time in Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 17, n.1.

<sup>315</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 11.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. Prov 21:31; Hos 10:14; Amos 1:14; Zech 14:3.

<sup>317</sup> Lit. “God sows,” cf. Hos 2:22.

<sup>318</sup> Note also Gen 2:4, “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.”

of disaster” (Jer 17:17, 18), “the day of calamity” (Deut 32:35 Prov 27:10),<sup>319</sup> “a day of carnage” (Jer 12:3<sup>320</sup>), and “the day of rebuke” (Hos 5:9). Another example is the naming of a day after rebellion by the people against the LORD, known as “the day of Massah” (Ps 96:8–9).<sup>321</sup> Again, these events are not literal days but periods of time: “For the day of their calamity has come upon them, the time of their punishment” (Jer 46:21). Boman explains,

[I]n part, the chronological times were named and characterized in accordance with their content in the Old Testament; day is the time of light and night is darkness (Gen 1:5; Ps 104:20). It is therefore something quite unusual when the day grows dark; Job cursed the day of his birth with the wish that it might become darkness (3:4 f.). When the prophets of judgment wanted to preach with drastic trenchancy that the day of the Lord would bring disaster, they said it would be a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2). Amos says: And on that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight (8:9). . . . [T]he threat lies not in the physical manifestation but in the unusual fact that the good life-giving light is to be changed into unnatural darkness, as the continuation of the oracle shows: I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation (8:10).<sup>322</sup>

It is also common for “day” to be defined by a particular quality of the period. A noteworthy period of suffering is called “the day of distress” (Ps 102:2),<sup>323</sup> “the day of trouble” (Nah 1:7), “the day of evil” (Prov 16:4), “your day of pride” (Ezek 16:56), “the day of his transgression” (Ezek 33:12). In Obadiah, these concepts are combined where Edom is condemned for gloating over Israel during the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, called “your brother’s day” (Obad 12) and “their calamity” (v. 13). These

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<sup>319</sup> Cf. Proverbs 27:10; Eccl 7:14; Jer 18:17; 46:21; 51:2; Amos 6:3.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 17:18; 50:27; James 5:5.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Exodus 17:7; Deut 6:16.

<sup>322</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 140.

<sup>323</sup> 2 Kings 19:3; Isa 26:16; 37:3; Jer 16:19; Hab 3:16; Prov 24:10. Also: “the day of my distress” (Ps 102:2), and “a day of sickness and incurable pain” (Isa 17:11).

phrases are equated with “the day of his misfortune” (v. 12), “the day of his destruction” (v. 13), and “the day of his distress” and “disaster” (vv. 12–14).

The term “day” also indicates an extended period of time that is named after its inaugural event. In his argument for two cosmic eras, Kline brings attention to the idiomatic phrase, “in the day of . . .” (or, “in the day that . . .”).<sup>324</sup> He argues for an extended “day” that could be indefinite based on the duration of the activity in the period noted. He bases his argument upon the occurrence of the phrase in Lev 6:20[13]:

There the Lord directs that “in the day” that Aaron is anointed he shall present a certain offering, which in fact was offered not during the seven-day period of the anointing consecration but subsequently and indeed as a perpetual offering thereafter. What the priest did afterwards is said to be done “in the day of” his anointing in the sense that the anointing event marked a turning point and gave a distinctive character to his subsequent life and ministry. In the usage of an equivalent idiom (consisting of the preposition “in” plus the infinitive) we similarly find that an introductory event is used to identify an era, so that what happens later is said to happen “when” the founding event occurred.<sup>325</sup>

Based on Kline’s argument, an event said to occur “in the day of . . .” does not require that that event occur immediately when the period begins. It could refer to any event within that period that is named for the initiating event. Thus, events said to occur in the DL, which is initiated by His coming, do not necessarily have to occur at the beginning of the DL, but could occur many years after that “day” begins.<sup>326</sup> This understanding has widespread application in this study since the coming of the LORD and the day of the

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<sup>324</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 8–13.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, further writes, “[I]n Deuteronomy 4:46 Israel’s victories in the Transjordan area some forty years after the exodus are described as happening “in their going forth from Egypt.”” Cf. Gen 33:18; 35:9; Deut 23:4[5]; 27:4, 12; Josh 5:4. Though Kline does not cite Exod 12:17 as the initiatory day, it is clearly the one referenced.

<sup>326</sup> For NT study, this fact most immediately brings to mind Peter’s statement that the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10). For premillennialists, having the day be imminent and the time when all things are re-created is a problem if the day of the Lord is 24 hours in duration; however, Kline’s examination allows for the day to begin like a

LORD are closely associated in scripture. The coming of the LORD refers to His actions in history while the DL refers to the time in which He acts. If true, then it is reasonable that events stated to occur at the coming of the Lord do not necessarily have to occur at the precise moment when He comes but some period subsequent to it.

In concert with the notion that “day” designates important events, scholars recognize that the phrase, “the day of the LORD” means any decisive historical intervention by the Lord.<sup>327</sup> Douglas Moo notes, that in the OT “the day of the Lord (also “that day,” etc.) denotes a decisive intervention of God for judgment and deliverance.”<sup>328</sup> Beasley-Murray writes, “The phrase provides a good illustration of the Hebrew concept of time as content rather than duration. For the Day of the Lord is not a calendar day but an event in which the Lord acts.”<sup>329</sup> Nogalski concurs, “The Day of YHWH describes a dramatic point of YHWH’s intervention in the affairs of this world.”<sup>330</sup>

The day of the LORD also does not solely reference an eschatological event since at least five of the locutions reference a historical event/period of the LORD’s direct historical intervention.<sup>331</sup> Everson writes, “[T]he Day of Yahweh was not viewed in the

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thief and the re-creation to occur at some future time as long as the day is a thousand years or more in duration (cf. v. 8).

<sup>327</sup> E. Jenni, “Day of the Lord,” *IDB* 1:784.

<sup>328</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture” (2010), 202.

<sup>329</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 11, continues, “It is commonly acknowledged that the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament is not a date but *an event*. We know it best from those descriptions that represent it as *the occasion of God’s intervention in judgment* upon the nations, bringing an end to man’s rebellion and initiating *the period* of God’s saving sovereignty (e.g., those in Joel 2 and Isa 13–14). It forms the boundary between history and the kingdom of God. Since it includes many elements, the Day is sometimes spoken in the plural—that is, as “those days” (Jer 5:18)—or as “the time” that is coming. The phenomena of the Day of the Lord *are complex*, and it is desirable to clarify the concept by considering its development and the variety of ways in which it is used.”

<sup>330</sup> James D. Nogalski, “Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading,” *Interpretation* (April 2007), 126.

<sup>331</sup> Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” 331; These historical “days” of the LORD include: Lamentations 1 & 2, and Ezek 13:1–9; (Looks back to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, 588–87 B.C.E.); Jer 46:2–12; cf. Ezek 30:9 (Destruction of Egyptian Army at battle of Carchemish, 605 B.C.E.); Isa 22:1–14 (Destruction of Israel and Jerusalem’s narrow escape from Sennacherib, 701 B.C.E.). Contra, “Day of the LORD,” *DBPET*, 109, which states, “Throughout the prophetic books the ‘day of the LORD’ and

pre-exilic and exilic eras of Israel’s history as a singular, universal, or exclusively future event of world judgment. Rather the Day of Yahweh was a powerful concept available to the prophets for their use in interpreting various momentous events-past, future or imminent.”<sup>332</sup> For example, “The day of Egypt” (Ezek 30:9) is the day when the LORD overthrows Egypt with a sword (v. 4) and is called “the day of the LORD” (v. 3). The coming of the LORD in judgment on the day of the LORD is also equated with “the day of visitation” and “the days to come.”<sup>333</sup>

“Time” (תַּיְתָּ *‘ēṭ*) and “end” (קֵץ *qēṣ*) are also important words for discussion.

Verhoef notes, “The main component of the meaning of *‘ēṭ* is not time in its duration but rather the moment or point of time at which something happens, German: *Zeitpunkt*.”<sup>334</sup> Like יוֹם, תַּיְתָּ “is used in expressions that qualifies the point of time. For instance: ‘It will be a time of trouble for Jacob’ (Jer 30:7); ‘it is time for the LORD’s vengeance’ (51:6); ‘it is the rainy season,’ lit., the time of rainshowers (Ezra 10:13).”<sup>335</sup> Further, תַּיְתָּ can designate the right time for something, the suitable, favorable time.”<sup>336</sup> Thus, “time,” when qualified, designates the moment or period in which the action occurs. Verhoef writes, “In an eschatological context *‘ēṭ* may designate the coming hour of judgment, for

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associated phrases refer to the *future time* of God’s decisive action and intervention into human history” (emphasis added).

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 355; De Souza, “The Coming of the Lord,” 170.

<sup>333</sup> Hosea 9:7; Mic 7:4; Jer 11:23; 23:12; Isa 10:2; 26:14, 21; 29:6; Cf. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 69.

<sup>334</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1252, e.g., “the time the women go out to draw water” (Gen 24:11); “it is not time for the flocks to be gathered” (29:7); “in due time their foot will slip” (Deut 32:35). On p.1253, he writes, “The time content sometimes outweighs the purely temporal meaning. For instance, when the psalmist declares in faith: ‘My times (*‘ittôt*) are in your hands’ (Ps 31:15[16]), he is not referring to the different phases of his life, but to his experiences, circumstances, fortunes, the times of sickness and healing, the occasions of distress and trust, etc. In this usage we have a transition out of the strictly temporal sense.”

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 4:1252–53.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 4:1253.

instance: ‘Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged (Isa 13:22); ‘the day of disaster is coming upon them, the time for them to be punished’ (Jer 46:21; cf. 50:31; 51:33); ‘the day of the LORD is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations’ (Ezek 30:3, cf. 21:25[30]).”<sup>337</sup> Regarding “end” (קֵץ *qēṣ*) he notes,

In an eschatological context *ēṭ* occasionally is combined with *qēṣ*, end, for instance: ‘the vision concerns the time of the end’ (Dan 8:17; cf. 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). In combination with *mōēd*, the ‘time of the end’ is designated as an ‘appointed time,’ fixed by God, viz. ‘the vision concerns the appointed time of the end’ (8:19; cf. 1:27, 29, 35). The statement, ‘it will be for a time, times and half a time’ (12:7), lit. has, ‘an appointed time, appointed times and half (an appointed time).’<sup>338</sup>

Note that the time is “appointed,” i.e., by the decree of the sovereign LORD (Dan 2:20–22). The appointed time of the end thus refers to a period of time no less than three and a half years in duration (Dan 12:7).<sup>339</sup> Verhoef writes, “[F]or the Israelite, time and history were inseparably connected. Throughout the OT attention is directed in terms of the stereotyped phrase *bāēṭ hahî*, at that time, to the events of salvation history in the past, and similarly to the expectations of the future.”<sup>340</sup> He continues, “All time is related to the action in history of the living God (Joel 2:1–11).”<sup>341</sup> Wagner relates “the end” with the “time of the final punishment,” and “the end of days:”

The term relates to the end time once each in Amos and Hab, 8x in Ezek, and 13x in Dan. Amos 8:2 and Hab 2:3, and frequently Ezek and Dan, employ the term in this usage abs., while Ezek 21:30, 34 and 35:5 expand this concise expression to *ēṭ wōn qēṣ* “time of the final punishment,” and Dan 8:17, etc. chooses the phrase → *ēṭ qēṣ*, 8:19 *mōēd qēṣ* “end time” (cf. 11:27), and 12:13 *qēṣ hayyāmîn* “the end of days.”<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Compare Dan 7:25; Rev 12:14.

<sup>340</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1253–54. For events of past salvation history, see Deut 1:9, 16, 18; 2:34; 3:4; 4:14. For events of future salvation history including judgment and redemption, see Isa 18:7; Jer 3:17; 4:11; 8:1; 50:20; Dan 12:1; Joel 3:1[4:1]; Amos 5:13; Mic 3:4; Zeph 3:19–20.

<sup>341</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1255.

<sup>342</sup> M. Wagner, “קֵץ (*qēṣ*) end,” *TLOT* 3:1154.

While Goldingay believes that the phrase “the final day” (קֶץ הַיָּמִין), lit. “the end of the days”) is the same time as “the time of the end” (עֵת קֶץ), in v. 4 he writes, “It is not a technical term for the End.”<sup>343</sup> It makes more sense if it is translated literally, “at the end of the days,” since it just spoke about 1,335 days and those who survive to the end of those days being blessed (v. 12). Comparison with v. 1 shows that the reason that those who make it to the end of days are blessed is because they were rescued by virtue of their names being “found written in the book.”

The ST also reflects the OT view of time and the “end” with some modifications.<sup>344</sup> Verhoef notes that at Qumran, קֶץ (*qēṣ*) “end,” becomes frequent “for periods of time in the divine periodization of historical epochs.”<sup>345</sup> This understanding also occurs in the Mishnah where “*qēṣ* is used for times and periods related to the divine purpose and sometimes explicitly of the time of the coming of the Messiah.”<sup>346</sup> Thus, the “end” (*qēṣ*) is an extended period of time marked off and identified by the events that best characterize it.

This insight has significant implications for key eschatological texts in the NT where a distinction is discernable in Jesus’ teaching between “the end of the age” (συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; lit. “the consummation of the ages;” Matt 13:29-30, 39-42; 24:3) and “the end” (τὸ τέλος; Matt 10:22; 24: 6, 13, 14). In Matthew 24, it could be that “the consummation of the ages” (v. 3) refers to a period of time in which testing and judgment occur while “the end” (vv. 6, 13, 14) refers to the end of that period of time. Those who

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<sup>343</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC, 310; cf. similar expressions in Dan 1:18; 11:6, 13; Neh 13:6. Contra Wagner, *TLOT* 3:1155–56.

<sup>344</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1253; Wagner, *TLOT* 3:1155–56.

<sup>345</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1253

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:1255.

make it through to the end of that period of time without falling away (cf. vv. 5, 10–11) will be saved (cf. v. 13).

### The Day of the LORD as the Time of Theophany

The Day of the LORD is “a specialized application” of the coming of God, which is primary.<sup>347</sup> Beasley-Murray writes, “*The Day of the Lord is the day of the coming of God.*” This conjunction of thought is common in the prophets. The Day of the Lord, the coming of the Lord, and the action of the Lord are not only related concepts but are at times actually interchangeable.”<sup>348</sup> Jenni writes,

The oracles of judgment arise, not out of reflection on the moral conditions of the people, but primarily out of confrontation with the holy God who will appear, whom the people must meet (Amos 4:12). That Yahweh himself and not some neutral fate is at the center of the prophecy of judgment, can also be seen by the prominent place occupied by the talk of the “Day of the Lord” or of “that day,” all the way from the earliest to the most recent time.<sup>349</sup>

Weiss writes of the parallel usages of the phrase in Isaiah and Amos,

[B]oth prophecies deal with the Lord making Himself manifest to the world, and with the subsequent after effects, especially as regarding the powerful and terrorizing impact of that *mysterium tremendum* on man. What is particular to Isaiah in this case is the employment of cosmic motifs current in various descriptions of the theophany, which, as we have already stressed, is actually what is chiefly implied in the expression “DL.”<sup>350</sup>

Isaiah is cosmic whereas Amos and Zephaniah are entirely within the human sphere.<sup>351</sup>

For this reason it is not legitimate to say that the appearance of cosmic signs means that it is supra-historical. These are literary devices that the Hebrew writers used to depict

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<sup>347</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 16.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>349</sup> E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *IDB* 2:127.

<sup>350</sup> Isaiah 5:19, 30; 13:10; Amos 5:18–20; Weiss, “The Origin of the ‘Day of the Lord’—Reconsidered,” 48.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

historical events as occurring at the coming of the Lord. Thus, rather than theophany, or the coming of the LORD being a subset of day of the LORD elements, the reverse is true.

Theophany is what is chiefly implied by the expression “day of the LORD.”<sup>352</sup>

### ***Theophanic Markers on the Day of the LORD***

Of all OT texts on the day of the LORD, the text of Zephaniah 1 links together more

theophanic markers than any other. Noteworthy elements are underlined:

- 7        Be silent before the Lord GOD!  
For the day of the LORD is near,  
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,  
He has consecrated His guests.
- 8        “Then it will come about on the day of the LORD’s sacrifice
- 12       “It will come about at that time  
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
And I will punish the men  
Who are stagnant in spirit,  
Who say in their hearts,  
‘The LORD will not do good or evil!’
- 14       Near is the great day of the LORD,  
Near and coming very quickly;  
Listen, the day of the LORD!  
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
- 15       A day of wrath is that day,  
A day of trouble and distress,  
A day of destruction and desolation,  
A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
- 16       A day of trumpet and battle cry  
Against the fortified cities  
And the high corner towers.
- 17       I will bring distress on men  
So that they will walk like the blind,  
Because they have sinned against the LORD;  
And their blood will be poured out like dust  
And their flesh like dung.
- 18       Neither their silver nor their gold  
Will be able to deliver them

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 48.

On the day of the LORD's wrath;  
And all the earth will be devoured  
In the fire of His jealousy,  
For He will make a complete end,  
Indeed a terrifying one,  
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

If this text is compared with Habakkuk 3, which is a vivid portrayal of the events of the Exodus, Red Sea crossing, and Conquest of Canaan using theophanic literary device,<sup>353</sup> similarities can be seen. Note the recognition formula (v. 2); storm-wind (v. 2); the coming of God (v.3); radiance/splendor (v. 3, 11); rays, lightning flashing forth (v. 4, 11); the hiding of His power (v. 4); historical wrath of pestilence (v. 5); His surveying judgment/assessment (v. 6); cosmic upheaval and earth quake (vv. 6, 9–10); human fear (vv. 2, 7, 16); wrath (v. 8); marching in indignation (v. 12). All these descriptions are part of the literary device to depict the LORD's coming during the events of the Exodus to bring Israel out of Egypt through the time of the conquest of Canaan. This time, however, the invading army will arise<sup>354</sup> and conquer at God's command in "the day of distress" (v. 16; cf. Jer 5:15). Thus the historical events of the Exodus onward are portrayed with theophanic language giving support to the notion that the eschatological coming of the LORD on the day of the LORD will also be fulfilled by direct historical intervention of His presence in a future historical period of time.

#### The Sealed Vision of the End (The Scroll): The Extended Complex of Events

Beasley-Murray notes that "the phenomena of the Day of the Lord are complex . . ."<sup>355</sup>

Kaiser notes that the Day of Yahweh is viewed "as one day that is *a collective event*

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<sup>353</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 288–96.

<sup>354</sup> Isaiah 2:19, 21; 33:10; Ps 12:5.

<sup>355</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 11.

embracing *a number of distinct happenings occurring successively in history*.<sup>356</sup> He also notes that “. . . the prophecy [about the Day of Yahweh] must be viewed as being *successively fulfilled through a number of events in history*, all of which depict, now one and now another, aspect of that final and climactic fulfillment.”<sup>357</sup> Craig Blaising speaks about the future time of the end being “a projected pattern that is typed from the sequence of kingdoms given in the visions of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, and 10–12.”<sup>358</sup>

By virtue of being a complex of events, the day of the coming of the LORD is extended in duration. Beasley-Murray states, “Since it includes many elements, the Day is sometimes spoken of in the plural—that is, as “those days” (Jer 5:18)—or as “the time” that is coming.”<sup>359</sup> In n. 1, he continues, “Note especially Joel 3:2, in which the prophet follows his account of ‘the *day* of the Lord’ (2:1) with the phrase ‘in those *days* and at that *time*’ (3:1).”<sup>360</sup> Boman speaks about “the necessity of a definite chronological sequence in the story of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*).”<sup>361</sup> Eichrodt also emphasizes this when he writes,

God’s plan of salvation cannot otherwise be spoken of than by reference to definite points in time which by their special significance stand out from the ordinary course of events in bold relief and become landmarks of God’s progressive action toward the attainment of his purpose. The delivery from Egypt, the sealing of the Covenant at Sinai, the conquest of the promised land are named at the very beginning of God’s relation with Israel as the decisive points in the course of events, to which the people’s thinking is to be directed in order to understand the more recent acts of God and to face them in proper readiness. For again and again in the course of history such times and days of Jahveh appear, announced by seer and prophet, expected and lived through in suspense because God’s

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<sup>356</sup> Kaiser, *Malachi*, 102 (emphasis added).

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

<sup>358</sup> Craig Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 33; cf. n. 16, where Blaising speaks about the wrath being an extended event.

<sup>359</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 11.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*; Cf. Jer 7:32; 9:25–26; Amos 4:2; 5:13; and 8:11.

<sup>361</sup> Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 141.

hidden redemptive will appears and provides a new goal for the work begun.<sup>362</sup>

The eschatological day of the LORD, which the prophets proclaim as the goal of history in both salvation and judgment, is in line with past interventions of the LORD in history. It is the period of time when the LORD once again steps into the course of history to act to bring about a succession of specific prophetic events that will result in the revelation of His presence and sovereignty.

When referencing the future day of the LORD, scripture also presents this as extended in duration, which is most readily seen in Daniel. Literary markers, particularly of judgment and wrath, form the link between the period identified as the DL and Daniel's seventieth week. Most specifically, the coming of the Lord in judgment and wrath is portrayed by a number of statements that have already been shown to refer to the LORD's action in history. Some of these will be discussed in the following chapters as they are interpreted by NT writers, but Dan 8:19 deserves comment here.

Daniel 8:19 states, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for *it* pertains to the appointed time of the end." The word "indignation" (זָעַם, *zā'am*) is virtually synonymous with "wrath" (קֶשֶׁפַּת *qesep*).<sup>363</sup> Wood states, "[T]he basic idea is experiencing or expressing intense anger. The word is parallel to *qāṣap*, except that its expression takes a more specific form, especially of denunciation. . . . The verb is used to indicate both the state of being indignant and the activity giving expression to that state."<sup>364</sup> "Indignation" also appears in Isa 26:20–21 as

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<sup>362</sup> Walter Eichrodt, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 12 (1956), 103; quoted in Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 141–42.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Jer 10:10; cf. Ps 102:11; Leon J. Wood, "זָעַם (*zā'am*) be indignant, express indignation, denounce," *TWOT* 247; cf. Gerard Van Groningen, "קֶשֶׁפַּת (*qesep*) wrath," *TWOT* 808–9; "זָעַם," *BDB* 276.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

a future period of time in which the LORD comes to punish the inhabitants of the world: “Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs *its* course. For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer cover her slain.”<sup>365</sup> Commenting on Dan 8:19, John J. Collins, Frank M. Collins, and Adela Yarboro write, “In the present context, the ‘wrath’ is not just a day of reckoning but *a period of history*. . . . the most immediate parallel to v. 19 is found below at v. 23, which refers to the latter time of the gentile kingdoms ‘when their sins are complete.’ . . . The ‘wrath’ has become a quasi-technical term for the tribulation caused by these kingdoms, especially in its latter phase.”<sup>366</sup>

This final period of the indignation is stated as pertaining “to the appointed time of the end” (Dan 8:19), and is elsewhere linked to the vision of the end, which Daniel is told to “conceal and seal up” (12:4).<sup>367</sup> In Daniel 12, the vision of the appointed time of the end has direct reference in v. 1 to “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time.” In v. 6 the question was asked, “How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?” To this question, the answer was given that “. . . it would be for a time, times, and half *a time*; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed” (v. 7). Verhoef states,

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<sup>365</sup> Note that this verse is speaks about the revealing of the blood of those slain is a term for judgment, in that judgment reveals the sins of individuals. Also, it has been noted that “bloodshed” as a sin is a direct violation of the Noahic Covenant, which the LORD made with all flesh as an everlasting covenant (cf. Gen 9:5–16).

<sup>366</sup> John J. Collins, Frank M. Collins, and Adela Yarboro write, *Daniel* (Hermenia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 338–39 (emphasis added); cf. John J. Collins, *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (FOTL 20; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 95; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 222–24; 303–06; Keil and Delitzsch, *Ezekiel, Daniel* (A Commentary on the Old Testament; trans. J. Martin and M. G. Easton; Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1866–91), 9:699–702.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 33–35.

In an eschatological context *‘ēt* [“time”] occasionally is combined with *qēš*, an end, for instance: “the vision concerns the time of the end” (Dan 8:17; cf. 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). In combination with *mô‘ēd*, the “time of the end” is designated as an “appointed time,” fixed by God, viz. “the vision concerns the appointed time of the end” (8:19; cf. 1:27, 29, 35). The statement, “it will be for a time, times and half a time” (12:7), lit. has, “an appointed time, appointed times and half (an appointed time).”<sup>368</sup>

Thus, this “final period of the indignation” is best seen as a period of duration no less than three and a half years and corresponds to the “time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time” (v. 1; cf. 7:25).

This final period of indignation is further clarified when Dan 11:36 is incorporated in the discussion. Miller writes,

The phrase “the time of wrath” is a translation of one Hebrew word, *zā‘am*, a term that usually denotes the wrath of God (cf. Isa 10:25; 26:20; 30:27; Mal 1:4), and that is the meaning here. God’s wrath will be poured out upon Antichrist and the whole sinful world in the last days during the tribulation period (cf. 12:1; Matt 24:21–22, 29–31; Rev 6–19). When that period is over, this tyrant’s activities will cease. Though Antichrist will be judged, he himself is part of God’s judgment upon the wicked (cf. 2 Thess 2:12), for those who reject the truth will believe his lies and follow him to their doom (cf. Rev 16:13–16). When the evil leader has accomplished his purpose, judgment will fall upon him (cf. 7:11, 26; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:20). Even Antichrist’s activities and the tribulation are permitted by the sovereign God to accomplish his purposes.<sup>369</sup>

During this period of three and a half years, the wicked king will unleash wrath upon Israel until “they finish shattering the power of the holy people” (12:7), for “he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done” (11:36).

Miller later writes,

The “holy people” in this context is a specific reference to Israel; therefore their “power” being “broken” signifies that the nation will be utterly defeated by their enemies. That the Jewish state will be attacked by many

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<sup>368</sup> Verhoef, *NIDOTTE* 4:1253.

<sup>369</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (NAC 18; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1994), 307.

nations and crushed by them is taught elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Zech 12–14).<sup>370</sup>

The indignation upon the nation, which is specified to Daniel in 12:1 as “your people,” is through natural historical means.<sup>371</sup> The wrath is carried out by a wicked agent, but it is the LORD’s indignation upon His unfaithful covenant people, which He decreed would be performed, and for which He granted the authority to the wicked king to accomplish.

The period of three and a half years is half of the final seven years of Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks (Dan 9:24–27).<sup>372</sup> These years are integrally related to Israel’s failure to follow the covenant.<sup>373</sup> The first sixty-nine weeks ended when the Messiah was “cut off” (v. 26), which some commentators identify with the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>374</sup> Many scholars see a break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.<sup>375</sup> Often the seventieth week said to begin when a covenant is made between Israel and the beast (or, “horn,” or antichrist). Daniel 9:27 states that in the middle of the week, after the first three and a half years, “he [likely the prince to come, i.e. the horn/beast] will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate. Following that would be abominations and desolation (of “the holy city,” i.e. Jerusalem, v. 24) until the decreed destruction comes upon the prince (v. 27; cf. 11:36).<sup>376</sup> This timeline is in complete accord with the “times, time, and half a time” in 7:25 and 12:7, or the 1,290 days of 12:11.

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Scholars are virtually unanimous that the weeks refer to years, not to literal weeks.

Covenantalist, James Montgomery Boyce, *Daniel: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 100, writes, “If literal weeks are involved, the prophecy is meaningless, since nothing important occurred within that time framework. If weeks of years are involved, then the time period embraces the years from the giving out of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the days of Jesus Christ.”

<sup>373</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 30, 231–33.

<sup>374</sup> Miller, *Daniel*, 267; however, Goldingay, *Daniel*, 260–61, sees this as being fulfilled in the events of the Maccabean period.

<sup>375</sup> Miller, *Daniel*, 269; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 262.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 260–63; 309–10; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 188–93.

## Summary and Conclusion

The language of presence-coming is used when the LORD acts in history to reveal or demonstrate His sovereignty. Historical events that are directly attributed to the presence-coming of the LORD includes 1) testing, such as by false prophets, false revelation, false messiahs; 2) judgment; 3) wrath; and, 4) rescue and redemption. The wrath in Daniel is not just a day but a period of time, which has been appointed by God as, “the appointed time of the end,” and is equated with the “time, times, and half a time” (Dan 12:7). Wrath is a quasi-technical term for the tribulation caused by gentile kingdoms, particularly the latter stage, and is for the holy people. The holy people in the book of Daniel refer to the nation Israel, as the elect and holy nation among the nations. The purpose of this appointed period of wrath is for the holy people to be “shattered, purged, purified, and refined” (Dan 12:7, 10). The vision concerning the events of the final period of indignation has been written down in a scroll and sealed so that it will not be intelligible until the time of the end. It details events of a period of indignation no less than three and a half years.

### **Part 5–The Coming of the LORD in Second Temple Literature**

This last section of chapter two will examine Jewish literature produced in the period between the OT and NT, referred to as Second Temple Literature (ST),<sup>377</sup> to determine if a significant development of the coming of the Lord theme took place. ST has been defined as the period from 586 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.<sup>378</sup> The broad time period encompasses

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<sup>377</sup> Also termed, “Second Temple Judaism.”

<sup>378</sup> Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002), 17; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 101, n. 1, writes, “It is customary among recent scholars to use the expression ‘Second Temple’ to refer to the time between the rebuilding of the temple after the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. This is the period that used to be called ‘intertestamental.’”

part of the OT and all of the NT. The “silent years” between the Testaments lasted approximately four hundred years between Malachi and John the Baptist.<sup>379</sup> The last half of the twentieth century has seen a boon in available research on extra-canonical literature from this period as scholars have increasingly seen its importance on proper study of the OT and NT, not to mention to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.<sup>380</sup> It will be impossible here to provide a detailed study of either scholarship or texts on the ST view of the coming of the LORD, although there are a few excellent resources that examine this topic in greater detail.<sup>381</sup> For these reasons only a high level synopsis can be provided; however, a high level overview will provide reasonable evidence that the complex unifying concept remained essentially the same in ST as that which is found in the OT. This presentation will show that for ST writings, 1) sovereignty must be demonstrated through the actual occurrence of God’s dominion in history rather than only at the end; 2) the coming of the LORD is the action of the LORD in direct historical intervention; 3) the actions of the LORD at His coming reveals his already existing sovereignty; and, 4) the time of the coming of the LORD is an extended period of time.

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<sup>379</sup> Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 18. Malachi’s prophecy took place approximately between 433–424 B.C.E. If Jesus was born 4–6 B.C.E. that would constitute a period of 418–429 years of silence until the birth of Jesus. It is interesting to note that the period that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years (Exod 12:40) in fulfillment to the promise to Abraham (Gen 15:13).

<sup>380</sup> Brant James Pitre, “The Historical Jesus, the Great Tribulation and the End of Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement, Volume I” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004); Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12–19* (Studies in Biblical Literature 33; New York: Peter Lang, 2002); John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997); James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God Vol. 1)*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); R. H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 3–58, 79–106; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 39–70; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*.

## Second Temple Literature and Background

When discussing Second Temple literature five distinct blocks of literature are usually in view: The Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, and Josephus.<sup>382</sup>

It is generally held that ST literature serves an invaluable resource in providing context for properly understanding the NT and the early church. Helyer writes, “Christianity now appears as a sister faith, alongside rabbinic Judaism, both of whom are greatly indebted to their mother, namely, Second Temple Judaism, itself a development of the ancestral faith rooted in the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>383</sup> Later he notes that ST provides insight into “the thought world presupposed by NT writers.”<sup>384</sup>

The problem one faces in study of ST literature is that there is no unified view.<sup>385</sup> This disunity arose from the fact that there was no “official orientation.” There were many sects and groups with their unique theological positions. In the words of Vena, each group had its own “rereading” or particular reading of the Hebrew traditions as done through their worldview.<sup>386</sup> Beasley-Murray notes “the kaleidoscopic nature of the apocalyptic writings” and “the fragmentary nature of apocalyptic representations of the end.”<sup>387</sup> There are a wide range of views, sequences of events, and contradictory events among different sources. There is variation on the number of messiahs, their origins, and their function. Some accounts view the messiah as human, others divine. Some view him as appearing only after Israel has repented and is righteous. Given the diverse nature of writings and views, Beasley-Murray is still able to summarize the general view of the last

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<sup>382</sup> Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, 21.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>385</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 40. On p. 49, he notes, “There appears to be an element in the expectation of the kingdom of God that appears in the writings of the Qumran community that makes it different from the apocalyptic literature produced by other Jewish sources.”

<sup>386</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 79.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

times “as being ushered in by the coming of God and the Day of the Lord, which will entail the overthrow of evil powers and the establishment of the kingdom of God in this world.”<sup>388</sup>

### Sovereignty Requires Historical Demonstration

It could be possible that the transition from a prophetic to an apocalyptic genre affected or at least reflected Jewish conceptualizations of the end time; however, scholars seem to be in agreement that while literary genre shifted, the Jewish hope during this time stayed firmly grounded in historical fulfillment. As Helyer notes, “Israel was *still* in exile and, thus, in a real sense, *still* under God’s judgment.”<sup>389</sup> He continues, “The Gospels must be read against the backdrop of a strong expectation that God would soon act to reestablish the Davidic dynasty.”<sup>390</sup> Though Jews were living in Israel, many, if not most, were in other nations. Even those who remained were under the authority of other kingdoms. They had not experienced the restoration that the LORD had promised in the prophets.<sup>391</sup> The Jews were still waiting for God to restore their kingdom.<sup>392</sup> The “end of the Exile” was a prominent part of both Jesus’ and Jewish eschatological perspective.<sup>393</sup> Vena writes that the distress of Exile during the ST period,

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<sup>388</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 46.

<sup>389</sup> Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, 57; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, 1991), 137–56;

<sup>390</sup> Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, 59.

<sup>391</sup> Walter Riggans, *The Covenant with the Jews: What's so Unique about the Jewish People?* (All Nations Booklets; Tunbridge Wells, England: Monarch Publications, 1992), 78, writes, “There was a partial fulfillment of that promise of restoration under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah (See Ezra 1:1–5; Neh 1:1–2:8), but it was a pale shadow of the glory promised by the prophets. . . . What about the vast majority of Jewish people though, those who lived in the Diaspora, scattered over the whole earth? For their part they never forgot the promises given by God of a glorious restoration of the people to the land, to renewed sovereignty in the land, and to a role in the final fulfillment of God’s plan for creation.”

<sup>392</sup> Luke 19:11; Acts 1:3, 6–7; 3:19–21, 25–26; 15:16–18; cf. Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30.

<sup>393</sup> Pitre, “The Historical Jesus, the Great Tribulation and the End of Exile,” 33–36; Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 268–72.

. . . made some in Israel look to the future for another coming of God. But this time God was going to finally put things in order. Not only was Israel going to be ruled by Yahweh, but the whole earth, the whole cosmos, was going to be recreated. It was going to be a return to the beginning, a new creation. And Israel was going to occupy a preferential place in this new order.<sup>394</sup>

It is on the basis of God's past intervention in the history of Israel that they based their future expectation and hope. Moore writes,

This [the apocalyptic genre] was more than a literary device for it betrays an awareness that in the past outstanding events in Israel's life could be found those acts of God whereby he made known to the nation his Lordship over it: and that those acts were the basis on which any confident expectation that God would one day intervene to make clear his Lordship, could be founded.<sup>395</sup>

Vena notes that the fundamental, unchanging belief of the Jews of the ST was that

. . . God, who had acted in the past on behalf of his people, would again intervene in the future though now in a more final and all-embracing way. *At the end of time* Yahweh would come and would unfold in the presence of the whole world that sovereignty which at the present time was owned only as confession of faith and hope in the face of foreign intervention and national disintegration.<sup>396</sup>

Nicholas H. Taylor agrees when he writes,

Underlying all such expectations is the conviction that God would, at some point in the future, intervene in the affairs of the world. Quite how this intervention was conceived varied from influencing the course of terrestrial history to the cataclysmic overturning of the prevailing human order and the establishment of divine rule on earth, in which the nation of Israel would be specially privileged.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 73.

<sup>395</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 25.

<sup>396</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 79 (emphasis original).

<sup>397</sup> Nicholas H. Taylor, "Early Christians Expectations Concerning the Return of Jesus: From Imminent Parousia to the Millennium," *JTSA* 104 (1999), 33; cf. Nicholas H. Taylor, "Prolegomena to a Reconstruction of the Eschatological Teaching of Jesus," *Neotestamentica* 32 (1998), 251–67; M. J. Borg, "A temperate Case for a Non-Eschatological Jesus," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1986), 521–35.

Thus, scholars agree that Jews of the ST period were in essential agreement with the OT understanding of the future intervention of God in world history to set up His kingdom with Israel as the head of the nations.

#### The Coming of the LORD is the Action of the LORD in History

The coming of God is the theme of apocalyptic.<sup>398</sup> As in the OT, the coming of God in ST is primarily an event of direct divine intervention into human history. For example, in the *Sibylline Oracles* God judges the world through war, sword, fire, and cataclysm (3:689–695). His presence is perceived behind historic events and not necessarily visible.<sup>399</sup> For example, in one text the coming of God will be perceived by the ability of Israel to drive out their enemies:

And at that time the Lord will heal His servants, and they shall rise up and see great peace, and drive out their adversaries. And the righteous shall see and be thankful, and rejoice with joy for ever and ever, and shall see all their judgments and all their curses on their enemies (*Jub.* 23:30).

In the *Testament of Levi*, the presence of the LORD looking upon the world is demonstrated by theophanic language, but the wicked on earth do not yet perceive it:

When, therefore, the Lord looketh upon us, all of us are shaken; yea, the heavens, and the earth, and the abysses are shaken at the presence of His majesty. But the sons of men, having no perception of these things sin and provoke the Most High. (*T. Levi* 3:9–10).

Beasley-Murray notes that there are frequent allusions to the coming of God in ST.<sup>400</sup>

The coming of God is the event that would bring revelation of His sovereignty. For example, *Jub.* 1:26–29 state,

And you write down for yourself all of the matters which I shall make known to you on this mountain . . . until I will descend and will dwell with

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<sup>398</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 41.

<sup>399</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 99–100.

<sup>400</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 41.

them in all the ages of eternity. . . . And the Lord will appear in the sight of all, and all shall know that I am the God of Israel and the Father of all the children of Jacob, and King on Mount Zion for all eternity. And Zion and Jerusalem shall be holy.

The coming of God would manifest itself in the kingdom of God.<sup>401</sup>

A dual period is prevalent in the view of the coming of the LORD. The coming of the LORD comes first then the coming of Messiah occurs after the kingdom and salvation have been procured by Yahweh. Beasley-Murray writes,

[T]he great messianic passages of the Old Testament proceed on the principle that the subjugation of the evil powers in the world, the submission of the nations to God, and the establishment of the new order of the saving sovereignty are the effect of the working of Yahweh, and that the task of rule in the kingdom of God is given to the Messiah. This is in harmony with what we have seen of the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament; it is Yahweh who comes in judgment upon the rebellious of mankind and who effects the deliverance and salvation of his people; the Messiah belongs to the new order. And that is the teaching of the well-known descriptions in the prophets of the Messiah and his rule (e.g., in Isa 9:1–7 and 11:1–9; Mic 5:1–4; Jer 23:5–6; and Ezek 34:22–24). Even in the prophecy concerning the prince of peace in Zechariah 9:9–10, the language and structure of which are so strikingly similar to the announcement of Yahweh’s coming in Isaiah 40:9–10, the victory is the Lord’s; the King-Messiah and his rule are Yahweh’s gift to his people.<sup>402</sup>

The “hiddenness of the Messiah” is in line with this understanding. This idea develops in the ST period and is the notion that the Messiah will not appear to Israel until they have suffered sufficiently for their sins, repented of them, and wholeheartedly sought the LORD.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 79.

<sup>402</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 22.

<sup>403</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 335–36, writes, “[T]here is the view occasionally expressed by the rabbis, that the Messiah will be revealed in the clouds of heaven. The name Anani, which occurs in the fifth and last generation after Zerubbabel in the Davidic Genealogy (1 Chr 3:24), is interpreted as ‘Cloud man’ (*‘ānān* = cloud) and taken to refer to the Messiah. But this does not mean that the rabbis regarded the Messiah as a heavenly king; he was, and continued to be, a natural descendant of David. The reference is to a wonderful manifestation to the people, by means of a miracle wrought by God, like the revelation of the Messiah on the roof of the temple. This is indicated by the words of the Targum, ‘This means King Messiah, who will be revealed’, and by Rabbi Joshua ben Levi’s combination of Zech 9:9 . . . with Dan

## The Revelation of the LORD

Scholarship is beginning to recognize that the apocalyptic writings of ST are already present in seed form in OT theophanies.<sup>404</sup> Klaus Koch writes, “Apocalypse means not only the revealing of details (revelation as the communication of doctrine) but the disclosure of possible participation in the final and unique, all encompassing coming of God among men. An apocalypse is therefore designed to be ‘the revelation of the divine revelation,’ as this takes place in the individual acts of a coherent historical pattern.”<sup>405</sup> In general Judaism of the ST continues the OT view of revelation as the result of the direct intervention of God into history. Oepke notes, “**רְאִיָּה** is a technical term for revelation particularly in the expression: ‘The kingdom of God will be manifest (**תְּהִיגְלִיתָא**),’ i.e., in the *ἔσχατον*.”<sup>406</sup> The idea is that God will manifest His sovereignty in the future. Yet in ST, revelation has still not reached a formalized doctrine. Oepke notes, “Even in Hellenistic Judaism *ἀποκαλύπτειν* and *ἀποκάλυψις* are not very common outside the LXX. Nor does Josephus display any central interest in revelation.”<sup>407</sup> Oepke also writes,

In general Judaism does not expect any direct revelation from God in its own day. Prophecy is over (1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). . . . Attention is focused all the more on the past and the future. Israel has in the Torah a revelation which is valid for all ages. In lesser measure the prophets and the writings share the character of revelation.<sup>408</sup>

Oepke writes,

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7:13 . . . in the following way: ‘If they (Israel) are worthy, (he will come) with the clouds of heaven; if they are not worthy, (he will come) poor (insignificant) and riding on an ass.’ For a people who are worthy, the Lord will perform the miracle of causing the Messiah to be revealed in radiant majesty; but to an unworthy people, the Messiah will come in humble fashion; and we may add, by such a people he will not be recognized until he has begun to perform the Messianic works, which will free them from affliction, and make them worthy by rigorous purification.” See also p. 303. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 98a; 96b; *y. Ta’an.* 63d; *Sib.* 5:414. *Tanhuma Toledot* 20.

<sup>404</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 41.

<sup>405</sup> Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London, 1972), 33.

<sup>406</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:577–78.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:578.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:577.

New revelation is expected in the last time. Here everything seems to depend on God's action. . . . The idea that the Messiah will give a new exposition of the Law is interwoven with the further idea that he will give a new Torah. Qohr., 11, 8, p. 52a (Str.-B., III, 577): "The Torah which a man learns in this world is as nothing compared with the Torah of the Messiah."<sup>409</sup>

### The Day of the LORD, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of Judgment

Most texts are not clear as to in what order events take place. There is a general line of thought that there will occur a period of intense tribulation prior to the Messiah's glorious coming, which would be the outpouring of God's judgment. This period of historical distress and tribulation would be followed by a personal appearing of God in direct wrath and destruction (removal from the earth) of all unrighteous. Then God would set up the righteous earthly kingdom.

### ***The Messianic Woes, or the Birth Pangs of the Messiah***

It is widely recognized in ST scholarship that many Jewish groups expected a time of intense suffering immediately preceding the coming of the Messiah and the age to come.<sup>410</sup> "The [Great] Tribulation" or "the Messianic Woes," according to ancient Jewish teaching, refers to that period of eschatological tribulation immediately preceding the age of salvation.<sup>411</sup> J. Julius Scott, Jr. notes that the phrase the "woes" or "birth pangs of the

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 3:577–78.

<sup>410</sup> J. Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 287; See also *Jub.* 23:14ff.

<sup>411</sup> For a thorough examination of this period in Judaism as well as its influence on NT writings, see Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12–19* (SBT 33; New York: Peter Lang, 2002); C. Marvin Pate and Douglas W. Kennard, *Deliverance Now and Not Yet: The New Testament and the Great Tribulation* (SBT 54; New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, 287–95; Conrad Gempf, "The Imagery of Birth Pangs in the New Testament," *TynBul* 45 (1994), 119–135; Dale C. Allison, Jr., "The Great Tribulation in Jewish Literature," in *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 5–25.

Messiah” became a technical term in rabbinic literature.<sup>412</sup> Schürer calls it “the final ordeal and confusion” and writes “that a period of special distress must precede the dawn of salvation.”<sup>413</sup>

The period known as the Messianic Woes bears striking resemblance to portions of the OT coming of the LORD on the day of the LORD. Allison writes, “In the Old Testament the coming of ‘the Day of the LORD’ is already associated with the pangs of birth (see Isa 13:8; 25:17–18; 66:7–8; Jer 22:23; 30:5–6; 48:41; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:9–10; 5:1(2)).”<sup>414</sup> Mark Dubis in the new *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* defines the Messianic Woes as,

... a tumultuous period of eschatological distress and tribulation that, according to early Judaism, was to precede the coming of the Messiah. Characteristic features include apostasy, war, earthquakes, drought, famine, pestilence, familial strife and betrayal, cosmic signs, increasing wickedness, and the scarcity of truth and wisdom. Otherwise known in the rabbinic literature as the ‘birth pangs of the Messiah,’ these woes lead inexorably to the birth of the final state of blessedness.<sup>415</sup>

Descriptions of this period are well known,<sup>416</sup> and include numerous events that have already been established to be theophanic markers. These include earthquakes,<sup>417</sup> famine,<sup>418</sup> wars,<sup>419</sup> betrayal by friends,<sup>420</sup> and signs in the heavens.<sup>421</sup> *Second Baruch* 25–27 divides the tribulations of the last time into twelve parts, each with one or more

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<sup>412</sup> Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, 287, n. 11, notes that this phrase can be seen in *b. Sanh.* 97; *Sib.* 3:635–61; *2 Bar.* 25.

<sup>413</sup> Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (trans. by J. MacPherson; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 2.514.

<sup>414</sup> Allison, *The End of the Ages Has Come*, 6, n. 6.

<sup>415</sup> Dubis, “Messianic Woes,” 890–91.

<sup>416</sup> Allison, *The End of the Ages Has Come*, 5.

<sup>417</sup> *Assumption of Moses* 10:4; *T. Levi* 4:1; *4 Ezra* 9:3; *2 Bar.* 27:7; *Apoc. Ab.* 30.

<sup>418</sup> *4 Ezra* 6:22; *2 Bar.* 27:6; 70:8; *Apoc. Ab.* 30; *b. Sanh.* 97a.; cf. *Mark* 13:8; *Rev* 6:8, 18:8.

<sup>419</sup> *1 Enoch.* 90; *4 Ezra* 9:3; *2 Bar.* 27:4; 48:32, 37; 70:3, 6, 8; *b. Sanh.* 97a, b; *b. Meg.* 17b.; cf. *Mark* 13:8; *Rev* 6:4.

<sup>420</sup> *Jubilees* 23:16; *1 En.* 56:7; 100:1–2; *4 Ezra* 6:24; *2 Bar.* 70:3–7; *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *b. Sanh.* 97a.

<sup>421</sup> *Sibylline Oracles* 3:796–808; *1 En.* 80:4–6; *As. Mos.* 10:5–6; *4 Ezra* 5:4, 5; *b. Sanh.* 99a.

woes.<sup>422</sup> At least one source notes a chastisement from heaven upon the earth followed by the coming forth of the LORD with wrath to execute judgment upon the earth (*1 En.* 10:2–15; 54:7–10; 91:5–7; 93:4; 106:15). Beasley-Murray writes,

Prophetic portrayals of the Day of the Lord give much space to the warfare that will take place at that time. In such descriptions the invading armies, which are often represented as merciless in their slaughter of people, are viewed as the scourge of the Lord, the agents of his judgment. This too is recognized by the apocalyptists, but they tend to lay emphasis on bloodshed as the expression of men's wickedness at the end of the age.<sup>423</sup>

The Qumran community believed themselves to be those appointed by God to wipe out heathen armies.<sup>424</sup> Thus, there is evidence from this brief study that the messianic woes were in line with the OT understanding of a coming of the LORD through the events of history, which brings about chastening judgment upon the world.

### ***The Day of the LORD, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of Judgment***

A number of writers state or imply that the theophanic imagery of OT prophetic texts concerning the day of the LORD is the seedbed from which arose the ST idea of a day of judgment.<sup>425</sup> Most imply that the day of judgment is the dividing line between this age and the age to come. Jenni defines the day of judgment:

In late Judaism and in the NT, the dividing act of the final drama between the old and the new aeon, bringing God's just judgment upon all men. As distinguished from the natural events or historical developments considered now and then in earthly life as divine punishment or deliverance which may be regarded as preliminary stages of the final judgment, the eschatological day of judgment denotes a universal forensic act of God or of a representative authorized by him for that purpose, which

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<sup>422</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 45.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 44; cf. *1 En.* 100:1ff.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 44.

<sup>425</sup> E. Jenni, "Day of Judgment," *IDB* 1:783–84; Dale C. Allison, Jr. "Judgment, Eschatological," *NIDB* 3:466; Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 43–5.

concerns both the living and the dead (who have been resurrected to be judged).<sup>426</sup>

Allison writes,

The Day of Judgment is a moment of crisis occasioned by God (Add Esth 10:11) or human beings (LXX Prov 6:34; Tob 1:18). Before NT times, it became a synonym for “the Day of the Lord,” the eschatological trial that will reward the righteous and punish the wicked (*I En.* 10:12; 100:4; *Jub.* 4:19; *Jdt* 16:17; *T. Levi* 1:1; *4 Ezra* 12:34; *L.A.E* 26:4). Later rabbinic literature similarly uses *yom haddin* (יִוֵּם הַדִּין; *y. Ned.* 26a; *y. Hag.* 8b; etc.). Variations include “day of great judgment” or “great day of judgment” (*I En.* 10:6), “day of the wrath of judgment” (*Pss. Sol.* 15:12), “days of judgment” (*I En.* 27:4), and “hour of judgment” (*Rev* 14:7). The closest OT par. is *yom naqam*, meaning “day of vengeance” (*Isa* 34:8; 63:4; compare *1QS* 10:19; *1QM* 7:5).<sup>427</sup>

Thus, the expectation of a visible coming of the LORD to bring a final, climactic, glorious victory at the end of a period of suffering is portrayed, at least in some ST writings, by the notion of the Day of Judgment.

## Part 6–Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a foundation for a detailed exegetical and theological integration of the coming of the LORD as a biblical theme. It was argued that the coming of the LORD is one theme within a complex motif interrelated to the themes of the revelation of the LORD, the sovereignty of the LORD, and the day of the LORD (DL). The coming of the LORD as an extended unified complex of events cannot be fully understood without seeing it as part of the other elements.

As representing the divine action, the coming of the LORD is the first theme within the complex motif. The Hebrew people spoke of the LORD as actively working in

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<sup>426</sup> Jenni, *IDB* 1:783–84.

<sup>427</sup> Allison, *NIDB* 3:466, continues, “Matthew, where ‘the day of judgment’ always serves to rebuke or warn, is the only Gospel to use the phrase (10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36). In 2 Pet 2:9 and 3:7 fire destroys the world on ‘the day of judgment’ and the ungodly are condemned. First John 4:17, by contrast, comforts readers that they will do well on the final day.”

the concrete reality of history. The Hebrew language used verbs like “to come” (בוא *bôʿ*), “to be [present]” (היא *hāyâ*), “to descend/to come down” (ירד *yrd*), “to ascend/go up/ depart” (לה *lh*), “to go out/go forth” (יצא *yāšāʿ*), “to visit/visitation” (פקד *pāqad* /פקדה *p<sup>e</sup>quddâ*), and “to see, look at, inspect/to appear” (ראה *rāʾâ*), and “come near, approach” (קרב *qārab*) to express the immanence of the LORD and His direct intervention in a time and place. This immanence has been defined in this chapter as the presence-coming of the LORD due to the Hebrew practice of using verbs to express the LORD’s coming and presence to intervene in history. Scripture consistently presents the coming to pass of the word of the LORD, its historical fulfillment, and all other actions of the LORD as occurring only through the presence-coming of the LORD. The LORD may be visible (“appear”) in this presence-coming; however, most often His presence is portrayed as perceivable only through the events in history that have been prophesied as those events that He will come and perform. When scripture does present the visible manifestation of the LORD it does so with theophanic imagery, or markers, which are themselves a form of divine self-concealment. These markers can occur literally in history or only as a literary device that the prophets used to designate the LORD as acting in the events of history. The principal events in which the LORD comes to perform are revelation, covenant inauguration and administration, judgment, wrath, salvation, and re-creation.

The second theme of the complex motif is divine revelation because at the coming of the LORD the revelation of the LORD occurs. No formal doctrine of revelation is present in the OT, though it clearly presupposes it. The LORD is the God who comes to act in history to reveal Himself through word and deed. Divine revelation takes many forms but the ultimate goal of revelation is that humans perceive His presence and

sovereignty by the accomplishment of His word in history. Revelation is, therefore, a process within history and requires time to unfold. If revelation occurs as events unfold in accordance with the prophesied word, and humans perceive the action of the LORD in bringing to pass those events, then historic events are part of and not to be distinguished from the finale. Any distinction would render the revealed knowledge open for doubt. The revelation of the LORD therefore requires both prophetic word and historical fulfillment, and historical fulfillment, as seen in in Part 2, requires the presence-coming of the LORD. The presence and sovereignty of the LORD is revealed through His action in history to inaugurate and administer His covenants, judge, execute judgment, accomplish salvation, and re-create. Each of these categories of the LORD's acting in history is complex and requires time to be fulfilled. That these events are part of the revelation of the LORD is confirmed by the appearance of the recognition formula, "then you shall know that . . . ," which occurs in conjunction with the fulfillment of each to confirm that the LORD has caused them.

Third, the coming of the LORD is a revelation principally of the sovereignty of the LORD. By His coming He acts in history as Revelator, covenant Suzerain, universal Judge, omnipotent Ruler, Savior, and Creator. His acts to judge, pour out wrath, and forgive, demonstrating that He alone has the ability and right to do those things. That He performs these acts within history in accordance with His previously given word demonstrates that He has in fact performed them. These deeds and His word bear witness to the fact that He has acted in history.

Fourth, the day of the LORD is the time of the coming of the LORD to reveal His sovereignty. The phrase, the day of the LORD, is non-technical as evidenced by the fact of

its limited use in the OT, its lack of appearance in ST, and because the phrase appears for a number of events that have already occurred. Instead, the term is best seen as a Hebraic idiomatic phrase where “day” is defined as either or both the inaugural event of a period of time, or the chief characteristic or event within a given period of time. Both of these definitions apply to the day of the LORD. First, the coming of the LORD, which is an event, inaugurates His day, which is a period. Second, the revelation of the sovereignty of the LORD is the chief descriptor of the reason that the events of His day occur.

It was noted that literature of the ST period was highly diverse with very little unity in views expressed. Despite this variety, at a high level overview, ST was shown to be in accord with the complex unifying concept as presented from the OT. The ST writings maintained the firm belief in the coming of the LORD as the direct intervention of God in history. Only through the direct intervention of the LORD to restore the kingdom back to Israel and end the Exile could the veiled sovereignty of the LORD be revealed. While the OT phrase “the day of the LORD” was not used the ideas that it expressed are clearly seen. Both the coming of the LORD in historical judgment upon Israel and His final, glorious coming in judgment upon the nations while bringing salvation to Israel are evident. The former is included in ST teaching on the messianic woes, or birth pangs of the messiah while the latter is found in ST teaching on the day of judgment. Finally, scholars recognize that while the NT largely adheres to OT theology, the ST provides a valuable contextual tool to better understand the background, culture, and worldview of NT writers.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE COMING OF THE LORD (JESUS CHRIST) THEME IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In chapter two lexical and exegetical evidence from the Old Testament (OT) and Hebrew Second Temple Literature (ST) was presented to support the proposed model's view that the coming of the LORD is an extended unified complex of events. In this chapter additional evidence from the NT and Greek ST sources will be provided to build upon the data presented in the previous chapter. It will argue that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as an extended, unified, complex of events fulfills the OT coming of the LORD<sup>1</sup> theme. Just like the OT theme, the NT coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is best understood to be one theme within a complex interpretive motif that includes the same four themes. This chapter will therefore be similarly organized in five parts: 1) The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; 2) the Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ; 3) the Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ; 4) the Day of the Lord (DL) Jesus Christ; and, 5) Potential Objections. For brevity, reference to the Lord Jesus Christ or the Son of Man will be shortened to "the Lord" unless otherwise noted. While NT writers reference either the Lord Jesus Christ or the Son of Man depending upon the emphasis they are making, it will be assumed that all NT writers equate the two. Finally, for clarification, the coming of the Lord will refer to the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to His Incarnation unless otherwise noted or clarification is required.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. Yahweh or God. When "LORD" is used, the meaning is Yahweh. When "Lord" is used, the reference is either to the canonical (OT and NT) coming of the Lord theme as opposed to the OT and ST coming of Yahweh, or God, theme.

## **Part 1–The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: Immanent Divine Action**

This section will present evidence to support the following points of the proposed model:

- 1) The NT continues the OT practice of what has been termed in chapter two “the language of presence-coming,” in which immanent divine intervention in history is portrayed by applying verbs of movement and action and uses it to refer to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) The NT presents the *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the OT coming of the immanent veiled presence of the LORD.
- 3) Because the OT coming of the LORD theme is fulfilled by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, all characteristics of an OT presence-coming of the LORD can apply to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) The immanent presence-coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed through theophanic imagery.
- 5) Like the OT counterpart, the NT understands the coming of the Lord to be an extended unified complex of events.
- 6) Finally, while the biblical-theological concept known as the coming of the Lord refers to the extended immanent invisible presence-coming of the Lord it does not preclude a posttribulational bodily appearing and descent in accordance with Acts 1:11.

### **Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Coming of the Lord**

This section will present lexical evidence to support the following: 1) The OT language of presence-coming portraying God’s direct intervention in history as suggested in chapter two can be observed in the NT. 2) Most importantly, the Greek word *παρουσία* has a semantic range that is well suited to continue the OT language of presence-coming. 3) NT writers used *παρουσία* with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ in a manner that can reasonably be interpreted as an OT presence-coming.

While not definitively establishing how NT writers used key Greek words, the following lexical analysis will provide a reasonable foundation for exegesis. This part will begin with a lexical analysis to provide a reasonable semantic range of key Greek words. It will not be possible here to provide a conclusive lexical argument; instead, the following will only suggest an explanation that makes reasonable sense of the data. Exegesis in subsequent sections of Part 1 will attempt to reasonably show that the actual usage of the language of presence-coming in the NT conforms to that presented here.

### ***The OT “Language of Presence-Coming” in the NT***

The NT continues the OT principle that the coming of the Lord refers to His direct intervention in history. While the NT is written in a different language, the ideas and theology are dependent upon OT scripture.<sup>2</sup> Osvaldo Vena’s study<sup>3</sup> suggests that there are a number of Greek words as used in the NT that express the OT and ST “idea of coming” including *πάρεμι* (*páreimi*, “to be present”), *παρουσία* (*parousía*, “presence, arrival”), *ἐπισκέπτομαι* (*episképtomai*, “to look upon, to consider, to have regard to, something or someone”<sup>4</sup>), *ἐπισκοπή* (*episkopē*, “to visit”<sup>5</sup>), and *ἐπιφάνεια* (*epipháneia*,

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<sup>2</sup> Albrecht Oepke, “*παρουσία, πάρεμι*,” *TDNT* 5:866, writes, “The term [*παρουσία*] is Hellenistic. In essential content, however, it derives from the OT, Judaism, and primitive Christian thinking.”

<sup>3</sup> Osvaldo D. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings: The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Literature 27; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 96–100, 107–8. The words *ἔρχομαι* (*érchomai*, “to come”) and *ἤκω* (*hēko*, “to come”) could be added to Vena’s list.

<sup>4</sup> In the LXX, *ἐπισκέπτομαι* is often used to translate the verb *בָּקַר*, “to visit” and carries a religious sense only when God is the subject of the verb. It connotes “to punish,” “to sit in judgment” (Exod 32:34; Job 35:15; Hos 4:14; Jer 5:9, 29; Sir 2:14; etc.), or “to graciously accept a person or people” (cf. Gen 21:1; 50:24f; Exod 4:31; 13:14, etc.). Cf. Hermann W. Beyer, “*ἐπισκέπτομαι*,” *TDNT* 2:602–3; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 96–97.

<sup>5</sup> In the LXX, *ἐπισκοπή* is also used to translate the verb *בָּקַר*, “to visit.” Beyer, “*ἐπισκοπή*,” *TDNT* 2:606, writes, “The true theological sense of *ἐπισκοπή* is as the translation of *בְּיָמֵינוּ*, ‘visitation.’” God will come on the day of visitation (*בְּיָמֵינוּ* *דְּיָוָה*, *ἡμέρα τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς*) to take account of His subjects. This visitation will occur by the Lord Himself who will visit for the purpose of blessing or executing wrath (Gen 50:24; Isa 10:3). In the NT *ἐπισκοπή* is found with eschatological emphasis in phrases such as *καιρός τῆς*

“appearing, manifestation”<sup>6</sup>). Neither ἐπισκέπτομαι nor ἐπισκοπή will have significant impact on the present thesis. Πάρεμι, παρουσία, and ἐπιφάνεια will be discussed next.

By all accounts, the most significant Greek word identifying the future coming of the Lord is παρουσία.<sup>7</sup> Some scholars note the continuity of the NT παρουσία of the Lord with the language of the coming of God in the OT by calling God’s coming His *parousia*.<sup>8</sup> Vena says that the *parousia* of God is equivalent to the being of God.<sup>9</sup> Meredith Kline calls God’s coming in judgment after the Fall the “Primal Parousia.”<sup>10</sup> Scholars also recognize the significance of the Greek word παρουσία by using the transliteration, *parousia*, as a technical theological term for the NT doctrine of His future coming in glory.<sup>11</sup>

Using the transliteration as a technical theological term can possibly lead to an exegetical error where coming of the Lord texts are said to refer to the *parousia* though the Greek term παρουσία is not necessarily present.<sup>12</sup> If NT writers were deliberate in

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ἐπισκοπῆς or ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς in Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44; 1 Pet 2:12, etc. In Luke, ἐπισκοπή is a reference to the Incarnation at its beginning (1:68, 78), during the ministry of Christ (7:16), and at its end (19:44). In the last citation, Jesus refers to the wrath that will come upon the city because they “did not recognize the time of [their] visitation (τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς σου).” Cf. Beyer, *TDNT* 2:606–7; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53* (BECNT 3B; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1563.

<sup>6</sup> “24.21 ἐπιφαίνομαι; ἐπιφάνεια, ας, ἡ,” L&N, 278; Bultmann, Lührmann, “ἐπιφαίνω, ἐπιφανής, ἐπιφάνεια,” *TDNT* 9:7–8; “ἐπιφάνεια, ας, ἡ,” BAGD, 303–04; Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 563.

<sup>7</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 3–6; Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 4ff.; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:858–71.

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans. G.W. Anderson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 304; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:863ff.

<sup>9</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 99.

<sup>10</sup> Meredith G. Kline, “Primal Parousia,” *WTJ* 40 (1978), 245–280.

<sup>11</sup> It is so used in Craig A. Blaising, Alan Hultberg, and Douglas J. Moo, *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (ed. Stanley N. Gundry; 2d ed.; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); cf. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 3; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> For example see Oepke, *TDNT* 5:863ff., who speaks of “*parousia* notions” in the OT, ST, and NT. *Ibid.*, 5:866, writes, “Apart from the actual occurrence of the word, the whole thinking of Jesus is permeated by ideas of *parousia*.”

their use (or non-use) of each Greek word, which is a tenet of verbal plenary inspiration,<sup>13</sup> then to say that a text teaches the *parousía* (the doctrine), though the Greek word *παρουσία* is not used, could lead to imprecision and error.<sup>14</sup> If NT writers did intend to distinguish between the *παρουσία* and the posttribulational appearing, then the common practice of using the transliteration to identify the posttribulational appearing would effectively mask any distinction that was intended. Interpreters should therefore use caution when stating that a text teaches the *parousía* where the biblical writer does not use the word *παρουσία*.

The most significant example of this practice occurs in Matt 24:29–31 and Rev 19:11–21.<sup>15</sup> Both of these texts are widely agreed to be posttribulational texts, and are frequently stated to portray the *parousía*, yet the Greek word *παρουσία* is not used. Likewise, in passages that describe the Lord’s coming with the clouds of heaven (citing Dan 7:13) *παρουσία* is not used.<sup>16</sup> This practice, however, assumes that *παρουσία* refers to a visible, transitory, movement from one location to another rather than an extended, invisible, immanent divine presence-coming, which, as will be presented, was a well-established religious technical usage of *παρουσία* at the time.

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<sup>13</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 242–43.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 60–61; Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 266.

<sup>15</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 185, 192, etc.; Alan Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” 136; Nicholas H. Taylor, “Early Christians Expectations Concerning the Return of Jesus: From Imminent Parousia to the Millennium,” *JTSA* 104 (1999), 43; Cf. J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM, 1990), 287–88.

<sup>16</sup> Texts that directly reference the Lord’s coming with the clouds include: Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; and, Rev 1:7. Matt 24:27, however, in which *παρουσία* is used, does imply the presence of clouds since lightning occurs only in the presence of clouds in nature. Still, clouds are not explicitly mentioned in this text. Also, Acts 1:11 teaches that He will come in a cloud; however, like Matt 24:27, it is not a direct citation of Daniel 7. cf. John F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture: The Church’s Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1950), 65.

If *παρουσία* is in fact a technical word for the posttribulational glorious appearing then it seems strange that the NT never uses it for that event.<sup>17</sup> It is also noteworthy that the word is absent from the book of Revelation, the book which provides the most complete teaching concerning the Lord's coming, and which was written late in the first century when the word's supposed technical meaning would have been well-established.

N. T. Wright offers valuable insight and caution when he comments on Mark 13:

But does not the passage speak of the 'parousia', the 'second coming'? Yes, the Greek word *parousia* does occur, in Matthew's version (24:3, 27, 37, 39; these are, surprisingly enough in view of its popularity among scholars, its only occurrences in the gospels). But why should we think—except for reasons of ecclesiastical and scholarly tradition—that *parousia* means "the second coming," and/or the downward travel on a cloud of Jesus and or the 'son of man'? *Parousia* means "presence" as opposed to *apousia*, "absence": hence it denotes the "arrival" of someone not at the moment present; and it is especially used in relation to the visit 'of a royal or official personage.' Until evidence for a different meaning is produced, this should be our starting-point.<sup>18</sup>

The question must then be asked whether or not *παρουσία* actually refers to the posttribulational appearing. Further, if *παρουσία* is not found in any posttribulational text, unless specifically qualified,<sup>19</sup> then to what is it referring? The word's absence from all definitive posttribulational texts should be cause for concern. At a minimum, in light of

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<sup>17</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 341. A number of other scholars from various eschatological persuasions also caution against equating the parousia to the posttribulational appearing including amillennialists: Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 266; G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians* (ed. G. Osborne; IVPNTC 13; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 137–39; Israel P. Warren, *The Parousia: A Critical Study of the Scripture Doctrines of Christ's Second Coming; His Reign as King; The Resurrection of the Dead; and the General Judgment* (2d ed.; Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg, & Donham, 1884; rpt. 1902), 32; and pretribulationists: William E. Vine with Charles F. Hogg, *Vine's Topical Commentary: Prophecy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 117–22; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64–77.

<sup>19</sup> It may occur to the well-versed reader that *παρουσία* does appear in 2 Thess 2:8, which is admittedly a posttribulational text; however, Paul is careful to qualify *παρουσία* with the word *ἐπιφάνεια*, "appearing." The usage in this verse would then state, ". . . the appearing of His parousia." It will be argued later that this qualification identifies an event within the *παρουσία*, the complex of events, in which His previously invisible sovereign presence is visibly manifested to the world.

these concerns one should exercise caution in applying the word to any text that appears to portray the coming of the Lord without clear textual justification.

With these considerations in mind, the following discussion will attempt to provide reasonable evidence for the following. First, *παρουσία* is more accurately translated as “presence, arrival,” with the emphasis on the subsequent and continuing presence after the arrival. Second, the appearance of the word in the NT is not strictly technical even when used in reference to the Lord. Third, when referencing the Lord or His day, NT writers used *παρουσία* to portray the coming of the Lord as an OT theophany. Finally, the word *παρουσία* as utilized by NT writers conforms to the proposed model’s view that the coming of the Lord is an extended unified complex of events.

### ***Etymology and Definition of Παρουσία***

The term *παρουσία* is based on the verb *πάρειμι* (*pareimi*), “to be present”<sup>20</sup> or “to have come.”<sup>21</sup> It can also have the sense, “to become present (arrive).”<sup>22</sup> The negative form *ἄπειμι* (*apeimi*) means “to be absent.”<sup>23</sup> The verb *πάρειμι* is itself composed of the preposition *παρά* (*para*), “beside,” and the verb *εἶμι* (*eimi*), “to be.”<sup>24</sup> It occurs as early as Homer with the senses of “to be near, be present, stand by, be ready.”<sup>25</sup> *Πάρειμι* is used no later than Herodotus, *The Histories* (440 B.C.E.), with “the extended sense, ‘to have

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<sup>20</sup> “*παρουσία* (*parousia*), presence, appearing, coming, advent; *πάρειμι* (*pareimi*), be present, have come; *ἄπειμι* (*apeimi*), to be absent; *ἀπουσία* (*apousia*), absence,” *NIDNTTE* 3:647; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859; *ibid.*, 5:865, notes that *πάρειμι* is not a technical term in the NT.

<sup>21</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859.

<sup>22</sup> Ceslas Spicq, “*παρουσία*, *parousia*, presence, arrival, visit, manifestation,” *TLNT* 3:53.

<sup>23</sup> *NIDNTTE* 3:647.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

come,’ i.e., ‘to arrive.’”<sup>26</sup> It is also noted, “this compound is to be distinguished from another one [not found in bib. Gk.] that has the same form but is derived from a different vb., εἶμι, ‘to go.’”<sup>27</sup> The significance of this data is that παρουσία is derived from the verb form that connotes “existence” (to be present) rather than “movement” (to go/come); therefore, the basic connotation of παρουσία is “presence” rather than “coming.” Also, if NT writers wished to denote the idea of coming rather than presence, there are other Greek words that more directly mean “to come” such as ἔρχομαι (*érchomai* “to go; to come;” Luke 12:45; 19:23), ἔλευσις (*éleusis*, “to come; a coming;” Acts 7:52), εἴσοδος (*eisodos*, “a way; entrance into;” Acts 13:24), and ἦκω (*hēkō*, “To come or to have come, to be here;” Rev 2:25).<sup>28</sup>

The lexical meaning of the word παρουσία is “presence, arrival,”<sup>29</sup> and first occurs as early as Aeschylus (c. 525–c. 455 B.C.E.) with this meaning.<sup>30</sup> Παρουσία was also used to denote the active presence of the subject, such as in legal documents.<sup>31</sup> One ancient contract is concluded “without calling for the presence (παρουσία) of the contracting parties.”<sup>32</sup> The word was also used to refer to the arrival of an army such that it refers to a

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> It is notable that in all major resources the first definition listed is always, without exception, “presence.” Cf. *NIDNTE* 3:647; Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Baker’s Greek New Testament Library; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 302; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–55; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, “85.25 παρουσία<sup>a</sup>, ας,” L&N 725; H.G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 611; BAGD, 629; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:858–59; Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 490; James Swanson, “παρουσία (*parousia*), ας (*as*), ἡ (*hē*),” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>30</sup> *NIDNTE* 3:647: “the presence (παρουσία) of a master is what brings light to the house” (*The Persians*, 169).

<sup>31</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859. Cf. Spicq, *TLNT* 3:54, n. 1, for additional ancient text examples.

<sup>32</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53, n. 1; Cf. Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 59–60.

period of time.<sup>33</sup> For example, Thucydides speaks of certain events transpiring “during the first ‘invasion’ (τῆς προτέρας παρουσίας).”<sup>34</sup> The word also references a period of time in which the army’s παρουσία was exerting an influence upon the people with whom they are present. Finally, while the παρουσία can be translated as “coming,” this meaning is applicable only insofar as “coming” is “the first stage in presence.”<sup>35</sup>

### ***Religious Technical Use: The Divine Parousia***

The importance of the word for the present study goes far beyond the basic definition. The utility of the word παρουσία allowed it to develop into both a religious, i.e. cultic, and a secular technical term.<sup>36</sup> As a religious technical term, παρουσία refers to the invisible active presence of a deity or other spiritual being. The direct presence of the deity or spirit is unseen but manifested through signs or other events. One standard lexicon states, “[T]he word [παρουσία] served as a cultic expression for the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power, or whose presence is celebrated in the cult.”<sup>37</sup> Humans were said to perceive the invisible presence through historical events, often referred to as the ἐπιφάνεια of the deity, rather than by visible sight. The point of note is that the παρουσία of a spiritual being is invisible, and remains invisible, though the reality of the spirit’s presence in a given location is perceived through the events caused by the exercise of its power.

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<sup>33</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; Thucydides, of Athens (c. 460–396 B.C.), *Histories*, I.128.5: τῆς προτέρας παρουσίας, “during the first ‘invasion.’” Cf. 2 Macc 8:12.

<sup>35</sup> BAGD, 629; cf. Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–55; Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 194.

<sup>36</sup> BAGD, 630; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–55.

<sup>37</sup> BAGD, 630; cf. *NIDNTE* 3:647–48; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:860–61.

The observable evidences that bring about awareness of the deity's invisible presence are sometimes called "signs" (σημεῖα). Speaking of the Greek god Dionysius one ancient text reads, "[T]he god has left behind him . . . evidences of his personal favor and presence (σημεῖα τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ θεοῦ)."<sup>38</sup> Literally, these are the signs of the presence of the invisible god. Compare this usage with Matthew 24:3 where the disciples ask Jesus, "what will be the sign of your *parousia* (τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας) . . . ?" Another ancient text, *De Mysteriis*, by Iamblichus, uses *παρουσία* to speak of the invisible presence of supernatural beings such as angels, demons, and gods.<sup>39</sup> Iamblichus states that the *παρουσία* of these beings "becomes clear to those in the know" by means of outward signs (σημεῖα) (*De Mysteriis*, III.6).<sup>40</sup> After speaking of the evidences of divine possession Iamblichus writes, "But the presence (*παρουσία*) of the god is different from and prior to this, and flashes like lightning from above."<sup>41</sup> Oepke notes that Iamblichus uses *παρουσία* in a manner that ". . . vaguely reminds us of descriptions of the *parousia* in the NT."<sup>42</sup> For example, compare this text to Jesus' description of the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man: "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the presence (*παρουσία*) of the Son of Man be" (Matt 24:27). Also, Iamblichus speaks of the *παρουσία* of the divine fire (III.6), which could compare to 2 Thess 1:7.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Diodorus Siculus 3.66.3; see also 3.65.3; 17.8.14; 17.9.1; 17.10.4; 17.48.2; 18.53.1; cf. BAGD, 629; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53.

<sup>39</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:860, notes, "Iamblichus, of Chalcis in Syria, at the time of Constantine the Great, founder of the Syrian school of Neo-Platonism, and reputed author of a work on the Egyptian mysteries, ed. H. Pistelli, 1894; *De Mysteriis*, ed. G. Parthey, 1857."

<sup>40</sup> Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, III.5, writes, "There are, therefore, many kinds of divine possession, and divine inspiration is aroused in many ways. Hence, there are indeed many different signs of it."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, III.11.

<sup>42</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861.

<sup>43</sup> Vena *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 51; cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:860, states, "In Iambl. Myst. the word is common and always sacral, cf. V.21 of the invisible 'presence' of the gods at sacrifices, . . ."

Early Christian writers used *παρουσία* in a similar manner to speak of God. Diognetus speaks about the unyielding faith of the Christians in the face of tribulations and the ever increasing spread of the Gospel as “the proofs of His presence (τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ δείγματα).”<sup>44</sup> He indicates that the works of faith demonstrate the invisible presence (*παρουσία*) of God. He writes, “Do you not see how they are thrown to wild beasts to make them deny the Lord, and yet are not conquered? Do you not see that as more of them are punished, the more others increase? These things do not look like the works of man; they are the power of God, they are proofs of his presence (*παρουσία*)” (*Diogn.* 7:7–9). One verse prior to this statement Diognetus writes, “For he will send him as Judge, and who will endure his coming (*παρουσία*) (7:6)?” The implication in this statement seems to be that at, or during, the *παρουσία* of the Judge the events that transpire will wreak havoc on the earth. Taken together with vv.7–9, Diognetus seems to be asking, if the *παρουσία* of God in salvation causes such powerful effects in believers what effect will the *παρουσία* of the Judge have upon unbelievers?

These three distinct examples, two pagan and one Christian, utilize the same principle regarding the religious technical use of *παρουσία*, which is that some type of physical indicator or “sign” is required for humans to recognize the presence (*παρουσία*) of the hidden deity.<sup>45</sup> The religious technical use indicates that the deity manifests his *παρουσία*, his invisible active presence, by acts of power that occur through historically verifiable events often called signs (*σημεῖα*). When used of a divine or spiritual being,

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<sup>44</sup> *Diogn.* 7:9; Cf. BAGD, 629.

<sup>45</sup> For numerous other examples see Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–54; Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “σημεῖον,” *TDNT* 7:200–61; BAGD, 629–30;

παρουσία refers to the invisible presence that is manifested by acts of beneficence or wrath. It is the effect on the events and people of the historical situation that declares that the deity is “present.”

### ***Secular Technical Use: The Hellenistic Imperial Parousia***

The word παρουσία also came to be used as a secular technical term.<sup>46</sup> It “became the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, especially of kings and emperors visiting a province.”<sup>47</sup> The religious and secular technical uses of παρουσία should not be viewed in strong distinction to each other.<sup>48</sup> One source states, “These two technical expressions can approach each other closely in meaning, can shade off into one another, or even coincide.”<sup>49</sup> The blending of the secular and religious meanings can be understood by noting that ancient cultures often viewed their sovereign as an incarnation of their deity. When the sovereign visits a city that city “honors him as a god.”<sup>50</sup>

Adolf Deissmann in 1910 was the first to argue based on papyri that the NT imagery used to portray Christ’s coming was drawn from the secular technical usage of παρουσία.<sup>51</sup> Other scholars have also listed papyri evidence for the secular technical use.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> NIDNTTE 3:647–48; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–54; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859–61; BAGD, 630; Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. L. Strachan, New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910; reprt. New York: Doran, 1927), 372–78.

<sup>47</sup> BAGD, 630.

<sup>48</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–55, provides specific examples in the papyri of the overlap in the use of παρουσία where rulers were spoken of as deities; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859.

<sup>49</sup> BAGD, 630.

<sup>50</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 3:54.

<sup>51</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 372–78. *Ibid.*, 373, n.1, notes, “Even Cremer, p. 403, could only say, ‘How the term came to be adopted, it would be difficult to show.’” Cf. Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (trans. W. Urwick; New York: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 238.

<sup>52</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859–60 (though more cautious in attributing a dependence of NT teaching of the παρουσία on the Hellenistic secular use); cf. *ibid.*, 5:866; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:54–55.

Deissmann states, “From the Ptolemaic period down into the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. A.D. we are able to trace the word in the East as a technical expression for the arrival or the visit of the king or the emperor.”<sup>53</sup> In 1929 Erick Peterson provided additional support for this view with newly discovered texts in Latin and Greek.<sup>54</sup> Peterson was the first to note the technical importance of the noun ἀπάντησις (*apántēsis*, “to meet”) when used with the παρουσία of a ruler.<sup>55</sup> It was on the basis of Paul’s use of ἀπάντησις with παρουσία in 1 Thess 4:17 that he argued for Paul’s dependence on the Imperial Parousia.<sup>56</sup> Numerous scholars have followed Deissmann and Peterson in noting the importance of this technical usage on NT interpretation, referencing it as the “Imperial Parousia,” “Imperial Spectacle,” or simply the “Hellenistic parousia.”<sup>57</sup> Plevnik speaks of “the imperial presence.”<sup>58</sup> The Imperial Parousia was so well-known throughout the ancient world that the technical use even made its way into Latin as “*adventus*.”<sup>59</sup>

Scholars have noted the parallelism between the Imperial Parousia and the NT’s portrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>60</sup> though some are cautious in stating a direct dependence on the Hellenistic influence on the NT use of παρουσία.<sup>61</sup> Speaking of the Imperial Parousia, Spicq writes, “In line with these usages, the NT uses *Parousia* for the

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<sup>53</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 372. *Ibid.*, n. 4, adds, “Or other persons in authority, or troops.”

<sup>54</sup> Erik Peterson, “Die Einholung des Kyrios (1 Thess 4:17),” *ZST* (1929–30), 682–702.

<sup>55</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6–7; cf. Erik Peterson, “ἀπάντησις,” *TDNT* 1:380–81.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 7, n. 17.

<sup>57</sup> Trevor S. Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008): 226–51; Spicq, “παρουσία,” *TLNT* 3:54–55; Helmut Koester, “Imperial Ideology in Paul’s Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. R. Horsley; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 158–66; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 50; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 5–10; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 168; George Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 91.

<sup>58</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 375; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6.

<sup>60</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 50; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:54–55; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 168.

<sup>61</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6–10; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:865–66.

glorious coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of time, his Second Coming. This return of Christ must somehow be filled out with the pomp and magnificence that characterized royal and imperial ‘visits.’”<sup>62</sup> Trevor S. Luke writes, “The parousia reception was the celebration of the arrival of a ruler or the ruler’s representative at the city. Parousia became a major theme in the discourse of Christianities beginning with Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians and continuing up to the present, eventually coming to refer almost exclusively to the eschatological arrival of the Christ.”<sup>63</sup> Still, many of those who affirm the technical use note that Paul has modified it from its cultural meaning.<sup>64</sup>

For the current study, the significance of this observation is that *παρουσία*, if used in the secular technical sense, refers to an extended event, which includes many scripted associated events, all unified under the configuration of the Imperial Parousia.<sup>65</sup>

Essentially, an Imperial Parousia was an extended unified complex of events that is conceptually similar to the proposed model. From as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. *παρουσία*, when used of the coming of a political official, came to be understood as referencing a prolonged event that included a number of distinct events.<sup>66</sup> Spicq writes, “There were great feasts, *panēgyreis*, including speeches of praise, gifts, games, sacrifices, dedications; statutes and buildings were erected, coins and medallions were struck, sentences were commuted, gold crowns were given, honors were multiplied.

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<sup>62</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 3:54–55.

<sup>63</sup> Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” 226.

<sup>64</sup> Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 228.

<sup>65</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:860, writes, “The customary honours on the *parousia* of a ruler are: flattering addresses, Menand. Rhetor. (Rhet. Graec., III, 368), tributes (Ditt. Syll., 495, 9. 84 f.), delicacies, asses to ride on and for baggage, improvement of streets (P. Petr., II, 18a, 4 ff. [258–253 B.C.]), golden wreaths *in natura* or money (Callixeinos in Athen., V, 35 [p. 203b], 2239 talents and 50 minas), and feeding of the sacred crocodiles, P. Tebt., I, 33.”

<sup>66</sup> Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium, 226–27; cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859; Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 373–78.

Glory and joy on the part of the people were in response to the prince's active and beneficent presence."<sup>67</sup> Luke describes the parousia spectacle:

The city elites headed up a procession of the associations of the city, bearing statues of the gods and their own standards, to a designated meeting place outside the city (*ἀπάντησις*). There, formal speeches and acclamations were offered, and the ruler was conducted back into the city where he would tour its important monuments, sacrifice to its gods, and meet with its ruling assembly. In rhetoric and image, the spectacle produced was one of consensus naturally reached in response to the divine boon of the ruler's arrival. According to this rhetoric, the gods facilitated the ruler's arrival at the city in order to bring order, plenty, and perhaps freedom where past, tyrannical regimes had left chaos and poverty. Like other imperial spectacles, the parousia reception 'reveals and makes present' truths about the empire, and as in the arena, the eyes of Caesar, either personally or through one of his representatives, mediate the spectacle.<sup>68</sup>

Generally, the Imperial Parousia included first, the *ἀπάντησις*, in which representatives from the city from all classes of peoples present in the city would go out to meet the coming dignitary at a designated location outside the city.<sup>69</sup> Next, speeches would be given at the meeting location in honor of the dignitary. Third, praises and accolades would be given. Fourth, the dignitary, with the city's representatives, would march into the city's temple where offerings and sacrifices would be given.<sup>70</sup> Finally, if the dignitary was the emperor, then his deity would be affirmed.<sup>71</sup>

Due to the burden of Imperial Parousias, the notion was well-known to both Paul and the Thessalonians.<sup>72</sup> Plevnik notes that the word "provided Paul with ready imagery for the depiction of the Lord's coming; it facilitated the people's understanding of Christ's return; and it explains Paul's unique depiction of the event in 1 Thess 4:13–

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<sup>67</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 3:55.

<sup>68</sup> Luke, "The Parousia of Paul at Iconium," 227.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859; Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 377.

<sup>72</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 372–73.

18.”<sup>73</sup> The notion that the NT is saturated with the Imperial Parousia concept is hard to contest and there is much that could be said in favor of the technical concept in texts where the word does not appear, such as the book of Revelation.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the utility of the secular technical use, a growing number of scholars have noted problems with the view that Paul was basing his teaching of Christ’s *παρουσία* on the Imperial Parousia.<sup>75</sup> There are at least three notable arguments that have been raised against the Imperial Parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18, which is the foundational text for the view. First, *παρουσία* is clearly part of Paul’s normal vocabulary since all non-technical uses of the word are found in his epistles.<sup>76</sup> If he had wanted to establish the word as technical it is doubtful that he would have used it so frequently non-technically.

Second, the Imperial Parousia has the city delegates as the agents of the “meeting,” who, on their own power, go out to meet the ruler and escort him back to the city.<sup>77</sup> They are also the agents in the other festivities of the Imperial Parousia.<sup>78</sup> By contrast, Paul portrays believers as being passive in the meeting, and being caught up by the Lord into the clouds.<sup>79</sup> Plevnik notes, “The agents here are God and his Christ.”<sup>80</sup> It is often noted that *ἀπάντησις* is used in Acts 28:15 and Matt 25:6 to speak of a delegation

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<sup>73</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6; cf. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 368–73.

<sup>74</sup> Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” 230–37, discusses at length the dual parousias of Jesus Christ and the lawless one in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

<sup>75</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6–10, provides the most detailed history and well-developed rejection of the view. He builds upon the arguments first made by Jacques Dupont, *ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ: L’union avec le Christ suivant saint Paul* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952). See also Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (ed. F. E. Gaebelien; The Expositor’s Bible Commentary 11; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 53; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 175; F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Dallas: Word, 1982), 103; Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1972; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 199.

<sup>76</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.; cf. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 199.

<sup>78</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8;

<sup>79</sup> Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 53; Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 199.

<sup>80</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8.

going out to meet an approaching dignitary and accompany him back to the city,<sup>81</sup> however, to call these technical uses seems to commit the fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer since in neither example are other attendant elements depicted in the text.<sup>82</sup> Even Deissmann noted distinctions between the Hellenistic Parousia and the NT view by calling attention to the fact that while crowns were given to the monarch by the city delegates during his *παρουσία*, crowns will instead be given by Christ to His people on that day (cf. 2 Tim 4:8).<sup>83</sup>

Third, the Imperial Parousia also fails to explain many other elements in the text that are indicative of theophany including the shout of command, the archangel, the trumpet, the clouds, and the fact that the dead are raised and then taken up together with the living.<sup>84</sup> Plevnik concludes, “Peterson, relying as he does on the Hellenistic *παρουσία*, reverses the traditional explanation and thus puts the cart before the horse. The Hellenistic *παρουσία*, if it ever influenced Paul’s presentation of the Lord’s coming, provided at best only a partial imagery for it.”<sup>85</sup>

Some evangelical commentators do not even mention the technical use of *ἀπάντησις* with *παρουσία*,<sup>86</sup> or they argue against it.<sup>87</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker writes,

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<sup>81</sup> Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 226–28; Cf. Erik. Peterson, “ἀπάντησις, *apantēsis*,” *TDNT* 1:380–81, cites Acts 28:15 (*eis apantēsin hēmin*); the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt 25:6); Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 91; cf. Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 146, notes that “almost invariably the word suggests that those who go out to meet him intend to return to their starting place with the person met.”

<sup>82</sup> Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 60, defines as “the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word’s entire semantic range.”

<sup>83</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East*, 373. Paul says “the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me in (*ev*) that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:8).”

<sup>84</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8–9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians* (ed. G. Osborne; IVPNTC 13; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 137–40.

<sup>87</sup> Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 175; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 103.

Apart from the possible connotation that *apantēsin* might have for a return to earth, the rest of the imagery (the clouds and being caught up to the Lord) are indicative of an assumption to heaven of the people who belong to Christ. That Paul adds his own definitive statement concerning the significance of this meeting in the clause *kai houtōs pantote sun kuriō esometha* (“and thus we will always be with the Lord”) suggests that both dead and living Christians will return to heaven with the Lord, not only to enjoy continuous fellowship with him, but also, in terms of 1:10, to be saved from the coming wrath of God.<sup>88</sup>

Despite whether *παρουσία* is used technically here, the usual argument by critics that *ἀπάντησις* requires an *immediate* return<sup>89</sup> to earth is not required.<sup>90</sup> There is nothing in the text to indicate that an immediate continuation of the journey to earth occurs.<sup>91</sup> F. F. Bruce writes, “[T]here is nothing in the word *ἀπάντησις* or in this context which *demand*s this interpretation; it cannot be determined from what is said here whether the Lord (with his people) continues his journey to earth or returns to heaven. Similarly it is not certain whether the Son of Man, coming “in clouds” (Mark 13:26 par.; 14:62 par.), is on his way to earth or (as in Dan 7:13) to the throne of God.”<sup>92</sup>

On the other hand, if the technical use of the word is affirmed, then there is actually more evidence to support the proposed model. In the technical view, during the *ἀπάντησις*, delegates meet the coming dignitary and pause outside the city with him. The

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<sup>88</sup> Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 175.

<sup>89</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135, writes, “The very thought of “meeting” assumes that the party met continues to advance without pause to his destination, which means in this case, Christ’s continuing uninterruptedly to earth.”

<sup>90</sup> Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 152, write, “There is nothing in the word, neither is there anything in the context, to indicate that the return to the earth must follow immediately upon the meeting in the air. Or, to express the same thing from another point of view, the Lord’s descent from heaven to earth is not of necessity continuous. Indeed there are cogent reasons for the conclusion that that descent will be interrupted for a measurable interval at the point of meeting with His redeemed people.” Cf. Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation: A Biblical Examination of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 104; Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 53; John Walvoord, *The Thessalonian Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 70; George Milligan, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 61.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 53; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 103; Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 152.

<sup>92</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 103; cf. Milligan, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 61.

group remains outside the city until certain scripted events, which are part of all Imperial Parousias, transpire before the ruler continues his movement into the city.<sup>93</sup> It can be seen from this analysis that Paul utilized certain cultural motifs to describe the coming of the Lord while not being forced to adopt the entire concept into his teaching. He could use the basic frame of the motif while changing as necessary the elements to fit the divinely revealed course of events.

Though some scholars have attempted to show strict dependence of NT use of *παρουσία* on the Imperial Parousia,<sup>94</sup> scholars have generally concluded that the Imperial Parousia is at best a guide for NT interpretation rather than a rigid framework that the NT *παρουσία* must adhere to.<sup>95</sup> Plevnik writes, “The Hellenistic *παρουσία*, if it ever influenced Paul’s presentation of the Lord’s coming, provided at best only a partial imagery for it.”<sup>96</sup> Even Luke, after concluding, “The basic eschatological message is thus fundamentally imperial in nature,” still admits, “[T]he imperial order is transformed through its expression in the theological and narrative framework of apocalyptic Judaism and Christianity.”<sup>97</sup> Vena similarly argues that the early church used imagery from their culture, which includes the Imperial Parousia, as a basic template to fill with new meaning in a way that new Gentile converts who were intimately familiar with them could understand.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” 227.

<sup>94</sup> Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, 142–45; cf. Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 45.

<sup>95</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 43; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:866.

<sup>96</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Luke, “The Parousia of Paul at Iconium,” 235.

<sup>98</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 43.



for all the Gentiles after the pattern of the Gentiles. And his appearing [παρουσία] is ineffable, as a prophet of the Most High” (8.14–15). Judah says to his sons, “And my kingdom will be brought to an end by foreigners, until the coming [τοῦ ἐλθεῖν] of Israel’s salvation, until the coming [παρουσία] of the God of righteousness, so that Jacob and all the nations may rest in peace” (*T. Jud.* 22.22). While these texts likely had a Christian interpolation,<sup>106</sup> they are nevertheless beneficial for providing insight as to how the word *παρουσία* was understood by contemporaries of NT writers. There are other notable usages of *παρουσία* throughout ST that will be cited later where hermeneutically important.

Philo does not use *παρουσία*, possibly because, as Oepke notes, “Hellenistic influences [upon Philo] almost completely obliterated the expectation of a coming of Yahweh or the Messiah, let alone other saviors.”<sup>107</sup> By contrast, significant insight into the NT meaning of the term can be gained through examining Josephus’ use of both *πάρειμι* and *παρουσία*. Oepke states, “Josephus uses the verb [πάρειμι] for God’s presence to help.”<sup>108</sup> He uses *παρουσία* more than thirty times both in the mundane sense of “presence” and “arrival,” “but also to describe God’s self-revelation to his people in the Shekinah.”<sup>109</sup> Josephus equates *παρουσία* with the *Shekinah* Glory-Cloud of God and uses the verb form for God’s helping presence.<sup>110</sup> Vena states that Josephus uses *παρουσία* “to refer to epiphanic manifestations of God in history.”<sup>111</sup> In *The Antiquities of the Jews*,

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<sup>106</sup> *NIDNTTE* 3:649.

<sup>107</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:864.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *NIDNTTE* 3:648; cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:864–65; BAGD, 629; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 98; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:864; cf. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 98.

<sup>111</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 99.

Josephus uses *παρουσία* as a reference to the Shekinah Glory-Cloud of the LORD over Mount Sinai:

So they passed two days in this way of feasting; but on the third day before the sun was up, a cloud (*νεφέλη*) spread itself over the whole camp of the Hebrews, such a one as none had before seen, and encompassed the place where they had pitched their tents; and while all the rest of the air was clear, there came strong winds, that raised up large showers of rain, which became a mighty tempest. There was also such lightning, as was terrible to those that saw it; and thunder, with its thunderbolts, were sent down, and declared God to be there present (*ἐδήλουν τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ θεοῦ*) in a gracious way to such as Moses desired he should be gracious (*Ant.* 3.79–80).

Later, Josephus writes,

Now God showed himself pleased with the work of the Hebrews, and did not permit their labors to be in vain . . . but he came and sojourned with them, and pitched his tabernacle in the holy house. And in the following manner did he come (*παρουσία*) to it: The sky was clear, but there was a mist over the tabernacle only . . . from there it dropped a sweet dew, and such a one as showed the presence (*παρουσία*) of God to those that desired it and believed it (*Ant.* 3.202–3).

Josephus also provides an enlightening description of Elisha’s request for the LORD to open the eyes of his servant in 2 Kgs 6:16–18. In the biblical text, the Elijah’s servant was afraid of the army of Arameans (v. 16). Josephus writes that Elisha begged God “to reveal (*ἐμφανίσαι*<sup>112</sup>), so far as was possible, His power and presence (*δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν*) to his servant . . . .”<sup>113</sup> Scripture records, “And the LORD opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all

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<sup>112</sup> L&N 24.19 *φανερῶ*<sup>a</sup>; *ἐμφανίζω*<sup>a</sup>: “to cause to become visible—‘to make appear, to make visible, to cause to be seen.’” *Ἐμφανίζω* is a verb that is almost synonymous to the noun *ἐπιφάνεια* “appearance.” Cf. “*ἐπιφάνεια*,” L&N 24.21, “to appear, appearance, appearing.” “*φαίνω, φανερός, φανερώς, φανερῶ, φανέρωσις, φανός, φαντάζω, φάντασμα, ἀναφαίνω, ἀφανής, ἄφαντος, ἐμφανίζω, ἐμφανής, ἐπιφαίνω, ἐπιφάνεια, ἐπιφανής,*” *NIDNTTE* 4:585–91.

<sup>113</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 9.55, “ὁ δὲ τὸν θεράποντα μὴ δεδιέναι παρεθάρρυνε καὶ τὸν θεόν, ὃν συμμάχων καταφρονῶν ἀδελῆς ἦν, παρεκάλει τῷ διακόνῳ πρὸς τὸ λαβεῖν αὐτὸν εὐελπι θάρσος ἐμφανίσαι τὴν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν.” Cf. 2 Thess 2:8; 2 Pet 1:16.

around Elisha” (v. 17). Josephus’ phrasing “δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν” exactly parallels Peter’s description of the Transfiguration of Jesus: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and presence (δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Pet 1:16; cf. Matt 17:1–9). For Josephus the power and presence of God was something that was naturally concealed from humans and therefore God needed to choose for it to be visibly manifested (ἐμφανίσαι).

Josephus provides another illustration of an appearing (ἐπιφάνεια) of God’s παρουσία through natural signs:

And now did God show his presence to Petronius (ὁ θεὸς δὲ παρουσίαν ἐπεδείκνυτο τὴν αὐτοῦ Πετρωνίῳ), and signify to him that he would afford him his assistance in his whole design; for he had no sooner finished the speech that he made to the Jews, but God sent down great showers of rain, contrary to human expectation; for that day was a clear day, and gave no sign, by the appearance of the sky, of any rain; . . . But as to Petronius, he was mightily surprised when he perceived that God evidently took care of the Jews, and gave very plain signs of his appearance (καὶ πολλὴν ἀποσημῆναντατὴν ἐπιφάνειαν), and this to such a degree, that those that were in earnest much inclined to the contrary had no power left to contradict it (*Ant.* 18.284–86).

Paul L. Maier comments on this text, which uses two important NT terms,

Josephus here uses the solemn New Testament words, *parousia* and *epipháneia*, the *presence* and *appearance* of God, for the extraordinary manifestation of his power and providence to Petronius, by sending rain in a time of distress, immediately upon the resolution he had taken to preserve the temple unpolluted, at the hazard of his own life, without any other miraculous appearance at all in that case; which well deserves to be taken notice of here, and greatly illustrates several texts, both in the Old and New Testament.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Paul L. Maier, in Josephus, *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (rev. and exp.; trans. W. Whiston; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 609, n. 6.

The most notable NT text illustrated by Josephus' use of these Greek words is 2 Thess 2:8, where Paul declares, "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His *parousía* (τῆ ἐπιφανεῖα τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ)." Josephus' use of these words follows the religious technical meaning discussed previously.<sup>115</sup>

Based on Josephus' use, as well as Hellenistic examples, if Paul views the *παρουσία* of the Lord as a theophany, which is the manifestation of the immanent presence-coming of God through historical events, then he could reasonably have in mind something other than a visible manifestation of the Lord in 2 Thess 2:8.<sup>116</sup> As shown in chapter two, the presence-coming of the LORD referred to the theophanic presence of the LORD at a specific time and place to intervene in history. Being a first century Jew, Josephus' use of *παρουσία* to describe the invisible Glory-Presence of the LORD demonstrates that the Greek word carried this meaning for contemporaries of NT writers; therefore, a similar use of the word to depict the theophanic coming of the Lord is within its semantic range. If exegesis of NT texts where *παρουσία* applies to the Lord's future coming demonstrates that a theophany is likely in view, then it is reasonable to believe that the meaning of *παρουσία* in that NT text likewise refers to the invisible Glory-Presence of the Lord. More will be discussed on this point below.

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<sup>115</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 98–99, writes, "[B]y applying the term *παρουσία* to the God of Israel, [Josephus] is doing what the LXX did not, that is, to reread a Jewish belief such as the coming of God, into God's theophany and/or epiphany, using Hellenistic categories. . . . It seems to us that Josephus is using the term *parousia* in a technical way."

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 137–39, n. 4:14, who also draws similar implication of Josephus' use of these terms for interpreting 2 Thess 2:8.

### *Non-Technical Use of Παρουσία in the NT: Extended Period of Active Presence*

Based on the previous study, Strombeck seems to be correct when he states, “No word in the English language carries the full meaning of the Greek word *parousia*. The English word *coming* does not fully express the meaning of the coming of the Lord as does this word. Therefore, the study of this word is of great importance and *the verses containing this word become the outstanding passages* in determining whether the coming of the Lord shall be before or after the tribulation.”<sup>117</sup> The noun *παρουσία* appears twenty-four times in the NT. It is translated as “coming” twenty-two times and twice as “presence;”<sup>118</sup> though several scholars have stated that most occurrences, if not all, could be reasonably translated as “presence.”<sup>119</sup> As even some critics have noted, the NT uses the word to emphasize the subsequent presence after an initial arrival.<sup>120</sup>

While many scholars regard *παρουσία* as a technical term for the eschatological coming of the Lord,<sup>121</sup> the NT witness is not so clear.<sup>122</sup> First, the word is technical only if properly qualified by a direct reference to the Lord, the Son of Man, or the day of God.<sup>123</sup> Wright states, “Paul can use it [*παρουσία*] of his being present with a church, and nobody supposes that he imagined he would make his appearance flying downwards on a

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<sup>117</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64 (emphasis original).

<sup>118</sup> Translated as “coming” in Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7; Phil 1:26; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8, 9; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28. Translated as “presence” only in 2 Cor 10:10 and Phil 2:12.

<sup>119</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 462–463; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 56; Hogg & Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 60, n. 1; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64–77; Warren, *The Parousia*, 20; Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 238.

<sup>120</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 45; cf. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 194.

<sup>121</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 7, n. 2, says that ‘parousia’ “is a technical theological term that is always used to refer to the NT expectation of a second coming of Christ from heaven to save his faithful people and inflict judgment on their enemies;” Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009), 918, defines *parousia* as “from Gk. *parousia* (“presence”); technical term for Jesus’ second coming.”

<sup>122</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 4–5.

<sup>123</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859.

cloud.”<sup>124</sup> The word is used non-technically in approximately a third of its occurrences in the NT. Second, the technical use of *παρουσία* is particularly difficult to justify in Paul’s writings, which is significant since it has been argued that Paul introduced this designation for Christ’s return into the early community.<sup>125</sup> All seven non-technical uses of *παρουσία* occur in Paul’s writings.<sup>126</sup> Plevnik states that the word *παρουσία*, as a non-technical term “is part of his active vocabulary.”<sup>127</sup> At best, the term is “quasi-technical” in that the term by itself was not established in the early church such that it could always denote the future coming of the Lord without qualifying it as the *παρουσία* “of the Lord.”<sup>128</sup> A clear understanding of the context, provided through a careful exegesis of the text in which the word is used, is necessary to guide its interpretation. Moreover, the meaning and use of the term when it is used non-technically should be a significant factor in interpreting its use when referencing the Lord, especially for Paul.

Two observations can be made concerning Paul’s use of the word. First, because the most debated rapture and posttribulational appearing texts in relation to the *παρουσία* of Jesus Christ are found in Paul’s writings,<sup>129</sup> his use of the word carries the most significance for the present discussion. Because Paul used the word for both the *παρουσία*

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<sup>124</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 463.

<sup>125</sup> Koester, “Imperial Ideology in Paul’s Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians,” 158–66; cf. Peterson, “Die Einholung des Kyrios (1 Thess 4:17),” 682–702.

<sup>126</sup> 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12; 2 Thess 2:9.

<sup>127</sup> As Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 4, notes, “The apostle [Paul] uses the word more often for his own coming (2 Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12) or for the arrival of his associates (1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7) than for the Lord’s coming.” It should be noted that Plevnik does not count the three occurrences in 2 Thess 2:1, 8, and 9 since he considers the authorship of the epistle in question; however, even including these texts Plevnik’s point remains valid since Paul uses *παρουσία* seven times technically and seven times non-technically.

<sup>128</sup> See discussion of the early church’s use of *παρουσία* in Oepke, *TDNT* 5:870.

<sup>129</sup> 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8.

of men as well as for the Lord, even within a single epistle,<sup>130</sup> it seems reasonable that his basic meaning of the word would not vary significantly; especially if Paul intended to establish the word as technical. If Paul were trying to establish *παρουσία* as technical then it seems reasonable that he would avoid confusing the churches by using the term non-technically to reference people and technically when referencing the Lord. Even if Paul was adapting the religious or secular technical meaning to suit his teaching concerning the *παρουσία* of the Lord, it seems reasonable that the word's basic meaning of "active presence," as presented previously, would be legitimate as long as there are no reasons, contextually, that would preclude this meaning.

Second, when Paul used the word non-technically, he did so to emphasize the effect of the subsequent and continued presence of the one who had arrived, which is consistent with the basic meaning established previously.<sup>131</sup> Hogg and Vine correctly distinguish the emphasis of *παρουσία* from that of other Greek words meaning "to come," or "coming" when they write, "[T]he difference being that whereas these words fix the attention on the journey to, and the arrival at, a place, *parousia* fixes it on the stay which follows on the arrival there."<sup>132</sup> Six times Paul uses *παρουσία* non-technically in reference to himself or an associate.<sup>133</sup> Hogg and Vine write, "'Parousia' literally signifies 'a being with,' 'a presence.' Not infrequently it is so rendered. It thus denotes a state, not an action. We never read of a *parousia to*, always of a *parousia with*."<sup>134</sup> To the Corinthians he wrote, "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence (ἡ

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<sup>130</sup> E.g., 1 Cor 15:23 (Christ); 16:17 (Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus); 2 Thess 2:1, 8 (Christ); 2:9 (the lawless one).

<sup>131</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 45; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 66.

<sup>132</sup> Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 87.

<sup>133</sup> 1 Cor 7:6, 7; 16:17; 2 Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12.

<sup>134</sup> William E. Vine with Charles F. Hogg, *Vine's Topical Commentary: Prophecy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 117 (emphasis in original).

δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος) is unimpressive and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). To the Philippians he wrote, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου) only, but now much more in my absence (ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου)” (Phil 2:12). In the latter text the meaning “presence” is further emphasized by its contrast with ἀπουσία “absence.”<sup>135</sup> It could be noted that Paul is comparing two distinct periods of time: “in” (ἐν) his presence (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου) and “in” (ἐν) his absence (ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου). In the former a period of time is required “in” or “during” which they performed acts of obedience. Likewise, in the latter period of time he is exhorting them to obedience during the entire period of his absence. It would mean little if Paul simply wanted them to obey at the moment he became absent or the moment he became present. He wanted them to obey during the entire period of his absence.

The word παρουσία is translated “coming” in four of the six times that it occurs non-technically, though a translation of “presence” better connotes the intended meaning. Paul wrote, “I rejoice over the coming (ἐπὶ τῇ παρουσίᾳ) of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part” (1 Cor 16:17). In the second epistle he wrote, “But God . . . comforted us by the coming (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ) of Titus; and not only by his coming (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ), but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us . . .” (2 Cor 7:6–7). Similarly, it is only during Titus’ subsequent presence that he could provide the report by which Paul was comforted. Comfort itself is not a momentary occurrence but something that requires time. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “so that your proud confidence in me may abound in

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 341; BAGD, 629.

Christ Jesus through my coming to you again (διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, lit. ‘through my presence with you again’)” (Phil 1:26). In these texts, the translation “coming” does not fully capture the meaning expressed. Strombeck writes, “It was the subsequent presence that brought the blessing. If the mere arrival had been all, then some other word would have been used.”<sup>136</sup>

Finally, Paul uses *παρουσία* to speak of the future arrival and subsequent presence of the lawless one: “the one whose *παρουσία* is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders” (2 Thess 2:9). Again, the emphasis is not merely the arrival but the subsequent presence.<sup>137</sup> The events denoted by “all power and signs and false wonders” do not occur at the initial arrival of the lawless one only but through the course of his subsequent presence and world-wide influence.<sup>138</sup> Hogg and Vine write,

The parousia of the Antichrist refers not just to the beginning, but to the course. See 2 Thess 2.<sup>139</sup> Paul references his parousia with signs and wonders, which are part and parcel of the period of the Antichrist’s parousia. The beginning of this time was “peaceful” and only during the parousia were satanic signs and wonders manifested. Surely not just the beginning of Antichrist’s reign is energized by Satan, but the whole course of it. The Greek order of words further stresses the satanic nature of his parousia.<sup>140</sup>

Ernest Best appears to see the parousia as only an initial event, but nevertheless agrees that the signs and wonders occur in the period between his parousia and destruction:

These **signs and wonders** are clearly associated with the parousia of the Rebel which suggests that they take place at the time of his parousia rather than that they precede it and lead up to it; in the latter case they would be the activity of ‘the mystery of rebellion’ (v. 7). But if they accompany the

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<sup>136</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 66; cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 4–10.

<sup>137</sup> Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 305–06; Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 87.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Rev 13:2–15; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 150–69.

<sup>139</sup> Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 263.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 87; cf. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 100.

parousia of the Rebel then this indicates that there is a period between his parousia and destruction during which they take place and during which **the perishing** (v. 10) are deceived and led to their destruction.<sup>141</sup>

During the period of the *παρουσία* of the lawless one the world is deceived by the signs and wonders that occur through the power of Satan (Compare 2 Thess 2:3–4, 9–11 with Rev 13:3–7, 12–14). Revelation 13:3–4 indicates that the reign of the lawless one will be at least forty-two months in duration, during which time these signs and wonders occur by the power of Satan.<sup>142</sup> From this examination, it can be concluded that in each non-technical use of *παρουσία* an extended period of time is in view in which the effect of the presence of the one who had arrived is being emphasized.

### ***Technical Use of Παρουσία in the NT: The Extended Royal Glory-Presence of the Lord***

As presented in the previous section, *παρουσία* occurs technically in the NT, to the extent it can be considered technical, only when properly qualified by a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, or the day of God.<sup>143</sup> This section will introduce the proposed model's view of the technical use of *παρουσία* in the NT. The following will present evidence that when *παρουσία* is used technically it can refer to the veiled theophanic presence-coming of the Lord during a period of time as opposed to a movement through space. Second, it will be presented that *παρουσία* can mean “invisible presence” in accordance with the religious technical use as presented above. The remaining sections of Part 1 will provide additional exegesis for key texts.

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<sup>141</sup> Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 305–06, (Bold in original). Best (cf. p. 353), is clearly aware that the fundamental meaning of parousia is “to be present,” and that Paul used it of the coming of others, “but this coming involves their continued presence after they have come.”

<sup>142</sup> Compare with Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14.

<sup>143</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859, states, “In general, however, the technical use arises first through the addition of a genitive or pronouns or verbal phrases.” Cf. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 215.

First, *παρουσία* can be used technically to refer to a past event of a limited period of time (2 Pet 1:16–18). Hogg and Vine write concerning the meaning of *παρουσία* that the passages, “. . . receive their true explanation only when the extended period just pointed out has its due consideration.”<sup>144</sup> Concerning 2 Pet 1:16–18 they write,

[Peter] is referring, not to a sudden and momentary manifestation of the Lord, nor to His future Advent, but to the period of His transfiguration before the disciples. . . . The power and glory of the Lord’s Parousia in the Mount of Transfiguration were no doubt anticipative of His future Parousia with His saints, but the passage refers directly to the past, not the future. The importance of the word in this passage, . . . [is] in its indication of a set period of time marked by well defined limits.<sup>145</sup>

The force of this point is that it establishes that the *παρουσία* is not movement from heaven to earth that is terminated upon arrival. Instead, *παρουσία* as a “presence with” as Peter is referring to here, indicates a period of time that is not limited by the completion of a spatial movement. In fact, on the Mount of Transfiguration there was no movement at all on the part of the Lord. The theophanic glory cloud of God enveloped them and the Lord was given glory and honor by the Father in the presence of deceased, glorified, and mortal saints to witness it. It was by witnessing this event that Peter could say he was an eyewitness of His power and *παρουσία*.

Second, *παρουσία* can be used to refer to the Lord’s immanent invisible presence. Concerning 1 Thess 4:15–17, Beale writes,

Paul is using the same imagery in 4:15–17 (as is used in Rev 11:10; 19:11; 21:1–3). What has been traditionally understood as the second coming of Christ is best conceived as a revelation of his formerly hidden, heavenly “presence.” The old-world reality will be ripped away, and the dimension of the new, eternal reality will appear along with Christ’s “presence.” The

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<sup>144</sup> Hogg & Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 60; cf. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 66.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.; See D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Matthew & Mark* (T. Longman III and D. E. Garland, eds.; EBC 9. Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 431–39, for defense of several views that would not affirm that the promise in Matt 16:28 (*et par.*) was fulfilled by the Transfiguration.

references to *parousia* in 2:19, 3:13 and 5:23 also carry the same connotation. When Christ appears, he will not descend from the sky over Boston or London or New York City or Hong Kong or any other localized area. When he appears, the present dimension will be ripped away, and Christ will be manifest to all eyes throughout the earth (see Matt 24:27). Just as one can lay flat a map of the whole world and see it all at one glance, so Christ will appear and be able to behold humanity at one glance and they him. . . . Interestingly, Revelation 21:3, 22 say that directly following Christ's final coming, God and the Lamb will form a "tabernacling" presence over all redeemed believers.<sup>146</sup>

Beale's statement provides a valuable conceptual model, which is very close to that of the proposed model. First, the *παρουσία* refers to the presence of the Lord not His coming, which indicates it is a state rather than an action. Second, His presence is not in a specific location but universal. Third, Beale provides a helpful understanding of the heavenly dimension. It is not "up," as in a three-tiered universe view, but is everywhere. "Heaven" is all around but veiled from the visibility of mortals.

Though Beale's view is useful, there are a few points that would distinguish it from the proposed model. First, Beale indicates that he equates *παρουσία* with the visible manifestation of his presence that has already begun; however, the previous lexical study demonstrated that *παρουσία* does not inherently require a visible element. *Παρουσία* means "presence" not "visible presence" or "manifested presence." A physical being is visible by nature so that *παρουσία* can mean "appearing." For a spiritual being that is naturally invisible, to convey "visible presence," as previously discussed, *παρουσία* must be combined with another word such as *ἐπιφάνεια*, "appearing, manifestation." Further, even when modified by *ἐπιφάνεια* or a synonym, the combination still does not necessarily mean the deity's presence will be directly visible.<sup>147</sup> *Ἐπιφάνεια* may simply

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<sup>146</sup> Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 137–39; cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 341.

<sup>147</sup> "ἐπιφάνεια," BAGD, 304.

indicate that the invisible presence of the deity who has arrived is intellectually perceived through the acts of benevolence.<sup>148</sup>

Second, Beale's view suffers from logical problems. He seems to indicate that everyone sees His physical body at once. It is physically impossible for the entire world to see His physical body at once, which Beale seems to try to account for with his flat map image. Christ can see everyone at once through His omniscience, but that ability is not available to everyone else. The proposed model would affirm that His presence is universal in the sense of a theophanic presence-coming which refers to the sphere of His immanent activity in history. This view would locate His presence-coming within the sphere of His direct historical intervention. Since, during the day of the Lord, He actively intervenes in the affairs of the entire world His "presence" is worldwide.

Finally, Beale's view does not seem to allow for a distinct future *παρουσία*. In other words, he seems to imply that the *παρουσία* has already begun. There is some support for this view since Peter says that he saw the "power and *παρουσία*" of the Lord visibly revealed to him on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–18; Matt 17:1–7<sup>149</sup>). Peter's statement could indicate that Jesus' *παρουσία* had already begun sometime during His earthly ministry but was merely veiled to everyone else.<sup>150</sup> If "power and *παρουσία*" refers to the Father granting Him authority, then even Jesus affirmed that it had already begun.<sup>151</sup> Jesus seems to be implying this understanding when He tells the

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<sup>148</sup> Bultmann and Lührmann, "ἐπιφαίνω, ἐπιφανής, ἐπιφάνεια," *TDNT* 9:8–9,

<sup>149</sup> Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36.

<sup>150</sup> Other NT texts also connect the "power and presence/coming" of the Lord. Cf. Matt 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; cf. Carson, "Matthew," 431–39.

<sup>151</sup> Matt 11:27; John 5:26–28; See also: Matt 7:29; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23–27; There is also an element of authority that was given no later than His resurrection (Matt 28:18; Rom 14:9) and after His ascension (Eph 1:20–22; 1 Pet 3:22). There is still another more explicitly revealed aspect of His sovereignty that remains yet to be fulfilled (1 Cor 15:23–28; Phil 2:9ff.).

High Priest, “Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matt 26:64).<sup>152</sup> Still, the proposed model is distinct from Beale’s view, along with those who argue that the *παρουσία* began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.<sup>153</sup> for at least one reason. At the time of Paul’s writing the *παρουσία* was still future and he stated that the resurrection-rapture would occur at the *παρουσία* of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 15:51–52; 1 Thess 4:14–17). Since the rapture did not occur in 70 C.E. the proposed model holds that the *παρουσία* is still future.

#### Theophany of the Son: The *Παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ

This section will present evidence to support the following: 1) the *παρουσία* of the Lord can reasonably be viewed as beginning as a Sinaitic glory theophany; 2) the *παρουσία* is a glory theophany that occurs over an extended period of time and incorporates a complex of events. The important phrase, “the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven” (Matt 24:30; et par.) will be examined in part three as an integral element of the biblical theme, the sovereignty of the Lord. Further, the phrase, “the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven” will be examined and argued to be theophanic and synonymous with the *παρουσία* of the Lord. Only texts that contain the *παρουσία* of the Lord and have bearing on whether the event is extended or consists of a complex of events will be examined.

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. Mark 14:62.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia: Jesus’ Eschatological Discourse in Matthew’s Gospel* (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 167ff.

### *The Παρουσία is a Sinaitic Theophany: 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18*

First, the proposed model holds that the *παρουσία* of the Lord conforms to a Sinaitic theophany. Paul places the rapture of believers in this text at the time of the *παρουσία* of the Lord (cf. 1 Thess 4:14–18; 1 Cor 15:51–52). Regardless of the duration of the *παρουσία* the rapture will occur at the moment the *παρουσία* begins because Paul adds the statement “for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (1 Thess 4:16).<sup>154</sup> As chapter two noted, virtually all theophanic events in the OT in which God intervened in history began with a statement about the opening of the windows of heaven or the LORD departing or descending from heaven.<sup>155</sup> The image likewise recurs in the NT in the same sense.<sup>156</sup>

Also, an increasing number of scholars believe a better archetype for Paul’s teaching here is the Sinai theophany.<sup>157</sup> In comparing this text with the descent of the LORD on Mount Sinai (LXX Exod 19:10–18), Plevnik writes,

Here the Lord comes down from heaven upon Mount Sinai. There are trumpet blasts, voices, thunder, and a thick cloud. Moses brings (ἐξήγαγεν) the people up the mountain to meet (συνάντησιν) the Lord. The agreement in motifs between LXX Exod 19:10–18 and 1 Thess 4:16–17 is thus rather extensive. And the likelihood that the Sinai theophany is the source of Paul’s inspiration is further enhanced by the fact that the Sinai event reverberates in Jewish apocalyptic depictions of the end-time coming of God (cf. *1 En.* 1:3–9).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Cf. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 73.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Gen 7:11; 8:2; 19:24; 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Isa 24:18ff.; Ezek 1:1; Mal 3:10.

<sup>156</sup> Matt 3:16–17; 17:5; Mark 1:10–11; 9:7; Luke 3:21–22; 9:35; John 1:32–34, 51; 12:28; Acts 1:11; 2:2–4; 3:21; 7:55–56; 9:3–4; 2 Pet 1:17; Rev 4:1; 19:11.

<sup>157</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 9; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 108–16.

<sup>158</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 9.

Several elements that argue in favor of a theophanic reading will be briefly listed here.<sup>159</sup>

First, the participants of the event and their origin argue that this is a theophany. The participants are the spirits of deceased believers (v. 14), God (v. 14), the glorified Lord (vv. 14–17), and the archangel (v. 16), all of whom are spiritual beings “from heaven.” Likewise, the fact that all living believers will be translated and caught up into the clouds, where the Lord is, further argues for a theophany.

Second, the trumpet blast is a regular element in theophanies. More importantly, the trumpet was a signature element of the Sinaitic theophany, which was the archetype of OT theophanies.<sup>160</sup> First Thessalonians 4:16 says that the trumpet is “the trumpet of God.” The source of the trumpet is therefore God Himself,<sup>161</sup> which precludes this trumpet from being identified with one of the seven trumpets in Revelation.<sup>162</sup> Strombeck writes,

The things to be observed here are: (1) God descended (from heaven) upon Mount Sinai. (2) The sounding of the trumpet was the signal for the people to come up to the Mount. (3) This was in the morning at the very beginning of the day when the law was to be given. (4) The trumpet was accompanied by thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud. Smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole Mount quaked. (5) The people met God personally as man had never before met Him since sin entered the human race. (6) The people trembled at the voice of the trumpet.

This first trumpet spoken of in the Bible is unquestionably a trumpet of God. In that it grew louder and louder it is seen to be supernatural. It displayed the terror of God and produced fear and trembling in the hearts of the people. It is the first trump of God.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> For a thorough study of the theophanic imagery used by Paul as well as its relation to OT and ST see Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 45–98; cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 17.

<sup>160</sup> Exod 19:16, 19 20:18; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 195.

<sup>161</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 87.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. discussion of trumpets and theophany in chapter two. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 109, correctly states, “Remembering that the angels are only a little higher than man, it is just as contrary to the laws of logic to say that ‘the last trump,’ which is God’s own trumpet, is the last of a series of trumpets blown by angels. Both men and angels are creatures of God. They cannot sound the trumpet of the Creator. No, the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with the trump of God.”

<sup>163</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 111.

The trumpet also reappears in day of the LORD texts as inaugurating those days when the LORD comes to execute His wrath.<sup>164</sup> The trumpet of God signals the beginning of the complex of events that brings about God’s reign. Though Douglas Moo believes this trumpet is referenced posttribulationally in Matt 24:31 he nevertheless correctly asserts that the trumpet inaugurates the last day of the Lord. He writes, “As the commentators note, this does not refer to the last in a series, but to the trumpet that ushers in the ‘last day.’ And this trumpet is a feature of the OT day of the Lord at which time the Jewish nation experiences final salvation and judgment (cf. Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:16; Zech 9:14).”<sup>165</sup> Other scholars also agree that this last trumpet refers to the inauguration of the last day.<sup>166</sup> The fact that the trumpet of God is blown indicates that the rapture is also associated with the beginning of the day of the Lord; therefore, the rapture will be when He comes to begin subjugating all hostile powers to Himself.

Most commentators associate the trumpet of God in 1 Thess 4:16 with the “last” trumpet in 1 Cor 15:51–52.<sup>167</sup> Plevnik writes, “In 1 Cor 15:50–52 the trumpet—the last trumpet—signals God’s reign and the events associated with its inauguration. But that reign is associated with the subjugation of powers hostile to God (vv. 25–27, 54–55). The trumpet in 1 Thess 4:16 is similarly associated with the exalted Lord’s coming to assume his rule.”<sup>168</sup> If this trumpet is taken to be “the last” of the trumpets that God alone

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<sup>164</sup> Robert H. O’Connell, “שׁוֹפָר (šôpār), ram’s horn,” *NIODTTE* 4:68–9.

<sup>165</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture” (2010), 198.

<sup>166</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, “σάλπιγξ,” *TDNT* 7:87.; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1296; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 744; cf. David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary: A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament* (Clarksville, Md.: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), 489–90, writes, “According to the *Alphabet Midrash of Rabbi Akiva*, seven *shofars* announce successive steps of the resurrection process, with Zechariah 9:14 quoted as a proof text: ‘And Adonai the Lord will blow the *shofar*.’”

<sup>167</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 200.

<sup>168</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 87.

sounded, of which the trumpet sounded by God on Sinai was the first, then this trumpet could compare to the “once more” of Hag 2:6 (cf. Heb 12:26). In that text God said, “Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.” Niehaus notes, “The ‘once more’ is understood to mean, ‘Once more, as I did at Sinai.’ The interpretation is appropriate because, whereas the Sinai shaking accompanied the revelation of the Law, the eschatological shaking will come when God returns to judge all people according to that Law, most perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 2:12–16; 3:19).”<sup>169</sup> It seems here again, depicted in 1 Thess 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:51–52 that God is coming like He did at Sinai where He descended upon the mountain in trumpet blast, fire, stormy glory, thunder, and lightning.

Third is the “shout,” or “cry of command,” which is more often associated with the battle cry of the LORD when He comes and the DL commences.<sup>170</sup> More than merely a theophany to rapture believers, this text portrays the Lord coming to initiate the period of the execution of His judgment, the DL. It is agreed that the *παρουσία* and the DL are synonymous; therefore, it is reasonable that the imagery Paul uses for the *παρουσία* are also found in OT DL texts. Paul’s immediate transition into a discussion about the timing of the DL in 5:1–3 provides further reason to see the events of 4:14–17 as the initiation of the DL. As shown in chapter two, the OT regularly sees the theophanic presence-coming of the LORD as the initiating event of the DL.<sup>171</sup> The rapture, then, becomes the means of rescue from the wrath to come (1:10), which the Lord Himself, as divinely appointed Judge, is bringing.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 344.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 84–86. Cf. Isa 42:13; Jer 25:30; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2; 2:2.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Isa 2:19–21; 42:14ff.

<sup>172</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 28, 31.

Believers are then caught up in the clouds where the Lord is and the DL is a day of clouds.<sup>173</sup> Plevnik makes an important note that he cannot reconcile with the typical posttribulational view of the *παρουσία*. He writes,

The cloud motif in 1 Thess 4:17 . . . does not belong to the description of the Lord's coming down from heaven but, rather, to the scene of the taking up of the faithful in response to his coming. In this respect, Paul's description diverges significantly from the synoptic depictions of the *parousia* (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27), from Revelation (Rev 1:7; 14:14, 16), and from Dan 7:13–14. This puts in question the apostle's reliance on Dan 7 or on the synoptic accounts.<sup>174</sup>

Plevnik's difficulty is understandable given his assumption that this text is depicting a posttribulational event since there would be conflicting images being described. Further, it poses a significant problem for that view. By contrast, if this text is portraying the inaugural event of an extended period of presence, which is veiled by the coming storm-cloud of God, then a different picture is possible. There are in fact two reasons why 1 Thess 4:17 does not match texts portraying the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven. First, they are referring to two different events. Paul is teaching concerning the inauguration of the DL and with it the Messianic woes, or the Tribulation (Matt 24:4–28), when the Lord comes in glory, veiled by the storm-cloud of God, to execute judgment (cf. 24:27). The other texts indicate the end of this period when the clouds part to reveal the Son of Man in all His glory. Second, this text refers to believers being taken into the clouds of heaven, which implies they are taken out of view of mortals (cf. Acts 1:11).<sup>175</sup> The posttribulational appearing texts all specifically reference mortals “seeing” the Son of Man's coming with the clouds.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Albrecht Oepke, “νεφέλη, νέφος,” *TDNT* 4:902–10.

<sup>174</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 88.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 88.

<sup>176</sup> Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27.

If the *παρουσία* of the Lord is affirmed to be a theophanic coming of the Lord, then the implications are significant. First, in accord with the model for theophanic presence-comings proposed in chapter two, *παρουσία* can refer to the Lord's veiled presence-coming on earth to intervene in the course of human history for salvation, judgment, wrath, and the revelation of His sovereignty. Second, the theophany in the book of Revelation can reasonably be applied to the *παρουσία* and, therefore, the rapture. If the time of the beginning of the theophanic coming of the Lord can be identified in the book of Revelation in relation to the sequence of prophetic events, then the timing of the rapture in relation to those events can be suggested.

### ***Equivalent NT Terms and Phrases for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ***

The NT refers to the coming of the Lord using terms and phrases that can be grouped into several categories that refer to the same extended complex of events. The extended unified complex of events to which these phrases, terms, or titles refer is in conformity with the OT theophanic presence-coming of the LORD. The phrase used to reference the complex of events depends upon what event or aspect within the complex is being emphasized. Phrases that reference the coming of the Lord can be rendered as synonymous or equivalent by comparison between various accounts known to be referencing the same event. The Synoptic accounts of the coming of the Lord provide the foundation for identifying these equivalences.

The NT's treatment of the Mount of Transfiguration and Jesus' statements leading up to it (Matthew 16:27–17:9; Mark 8:38–9:8; Luke 9:26–36; 2 Pet 1:16–18) provides the best starting point of comparison. Table 1 below provides the parallel verses. Parallel

phrases are either underlined or italicized to provide easier comparison. Those phrases that are underlined refer to the coming of the Lord. Italics indicate the important parallel to note for each row.

**Table 1: The Mount of Transfiguration**

<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>2 Peter</b>
<p>“For the Son of Man is <u>going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels</u>, and will then repay every man according to his deeds” (16:27).</p>	<p>“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him <u>when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels</u>” (8:38).</p>	<p>“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him <u>when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels</u>” (9:26).</p>	<p>“For when He received <u>honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory</u>, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased. . . . So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts” (1:17, 19).</p>
<p>“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see <u>the Son of Man coming in His kingdom</u>. . . . And He was <u>transfigured before them</u>” (16:28; 17:2).</p>	<p>“And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see <u>the kingdom of God after it has come with power</u> (<i>ἐληλυθυῖαν ἐν δυνάμει</i>, lit. “having come in power). . . . And He was <u>transfigured before them</u>” (9:1, 2)</p>	<p>“But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see <u>the kingdom of God</u>. . . . Now Peter and his companions . . . saw <u>His glory</u>” (9:27, 32).</p>	<p>“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you <u>the power and coming</u> (<i>δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν</i>) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of <u>His majesty</u>” (1:16).</p>
<p>“Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves” (17:1).</p>	<p>“Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves” (9:2).</p>	<p>“He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray” (9:28).</p>	<p>“and we ourselves heard <u>this utterance made from heaven</u> when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (1:18).</p>

<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>2 Peter</b>
<u>“And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (17:2).</u>	<u>“And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white,” (9:2–3).</u>	<u>“And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming” (9:29).</u>	<u>“For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” (1:17).</u>
<u>“While he [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” “When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified” (17:5–6).</u>	<u>“For he did not know what to answer, for they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” (9:6–7).</u>	<u>While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (9:34–35).</u>	<u>“For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (1:18).</u>

Assuming the Transfiguration is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Matt 16:28,<sup>177</sup> then a number of important observations can be made regarding parallel texts for the event described. First, all renderings of this event refer to the same event; therefore, the various phrases used to describe it are synonymous. Second, Peter’s statement that he was an “eyewitness” of the “power and *παρουσία* of our Lord” is defined as: 1) Jesus receiving honor and glory from God the Father (v. 17); 2) when the Majestic Glory declared to Him (and them), “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” (v. 17); and 3) the declaration was made “from heaven” (v. 18). On this last point, the Synoptics record the declaration came from out of the cloud that they all had entered into (cf. Mark 9:34–35).

<sup>177</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” 431, notes that this is the majority view, but it is not without opposition. Ibid., 431–39, provides a list of the multiple alternative views and their arguments. Cf. *NIDNTTE* 3:651, says that “the ref. may be to Jesus’ first coming, but most commentators argue that his future return is in view.” The article makes no mention that Peter specifically referenced the Mount of Transfiguration. This writer, however, would argue that Peter’s statement that he was an “eyewitness” of the power and *παρουσία* of the Lord and the clear parallels seen in Table 1 are sufficient to demonstrate this point. Those who reject

Third, because all accounts note that some would “see” the event, which is “the Son of Man coming in His kingdom,” the “see” is to be distinguished from the “coming in His kingdom.”

Fourth, which has already been noted, *παρουσία* refers to a period of time and not an action or movement.<sup>178</sup> Fifth, the entire account follows the literary form of theophany.<sup>179</sup> Each of the phrases identified as a title for the coming of the Lord complex is set in theophanic language with such theophanic imagery as angels, glory, the glory cloud, and the voice out of heaven. Moreover, Peter’s reference to this event equates all various titles of the coming of the Lord in Table 1 with the “power and *παρουσία* of our Lord.” Josephus used this phrase to refer to the veiled Shekinah glory of the Lord and His angelic army in 2 Kgs 6:16–18. As noted previously, Josephus used *ἐμφανίσαι* to indicate that the “power and parousia” of God was visibly manifested. This indicates that Josephus understood that God’s “power and parousia” is normally veiled. Peter’s description did not require a word indicating its unveiling since they were within the theophanic cloud when they witnessed it. They were essentially behind the veil. Sixth, the coming of the Lord is directly linked to retribution as a constitutive part of His coming. When the Lord comes He “will then repay every man according to his deeds” (Matt 16:27). The statement of retribution in Matt 16:27 is parallel to the statement in Luke 9:26 and seems to define it: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him” (cf. Mark 8:38). With this link all statements of the Lord’s coming to repay are identified as equal to the extended unified complex of events

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this interpretation seem to do so because they define *παρουσία* as “coming” as in second coming, which has not yet occurred; therefore, an alternative interpretation must be sought.

<sup>178</sup> Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 60.

<sup>179</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 336–39.

(Rev 22:12). In the OT, the retribution of the Lord occurs through historical events including sword, famine, pestilence, and beasts of the earth (Ezek 5:15–17; 6:11–12; compare with Matt 24:6–7, 21; Rev 6:3–8), but rarely includes a complete end (Ezek 11:13ff.; 12:16; 20:22). Instead, it points to the period of the wrath, not necessarily the culmination of it. The repayment leads to acknowledgement of who is sovereign, and sometimes repentance leading to salvation (Ezek 11:8–20).

### The Appearings of the Lord Jesus Christ

A fundamental element of the proposed model is that there is necessarily a distinction between the Lord’s *παρουσία* and His appearing (*ἐπιφάνεια*). It must be possible for the Lord to be present but not visible to mortal humans. Upon examination of the NT there is evidence for this view. First, unlike the *ἀποκάλυψις* and *παρουσία* of the Lord, the *ἐπιφάνεια* (*epipháneia*, “appearing, manifestation”<sup>180</sup>) of the Lord does not refer to an extended complex of events but to any manifestation of the Lord or His presence at a particular place and time for a soteriological purpose. One lexicon states, “. . . as a religious technical term it [*ἐπιφάνεια*] means a visible manifestation of a hidden divinity, either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power by which its presence is made known.”<sup>181</sup> This visual manifestation does not require that His physical form be seen, only that some type of visible manifestation of His presence occurs.

The proposed model argues that the visible appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ is neither required by His presence nor is it universal when He does appear. First, the Lord

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<sup>180</sup> “24.21 ἐπιφαίνομαι; ἐπιφάνεια, ας, f;” L&N, 278; Bultmann, Lührmann, “ἐπιφαίνω, ἐπιφανής, ἐπιφάνεια,” *TDNT* 9:7–8; “ἐπιφάνεια, ας, ή,” BAGD, 303–04; Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 563.

<sup>181</sup> “ἐπιφάνεια, ας, ή,” BAGD, 304; cf. Josephus. *Ant.* 1.255; 2.339; 3.310; 9.60; 18, 75; 286; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 97.

appears when and to whom He wishes. Peter said, “God . . . granted that He [Jesus] should become visible” (Acts 10:40). Later, Jesus appeared to the disciples and disappeared at will (Luke 24:31, 36–37; John 20:19). Second, He may be present without being visible. After His resurrection, the Lord “presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days” (Acts 1:3). Before the ascension, the Lord was present with them for a period of forty days though He was not always visible (cf. John 20:26). Of John 21:1, “manifested himself” (ἐφανερώσεν ἑαυτὸν), A. T. Robertson writes, “Jesus was only seen during the forty days now and then (Acts 1:3), ten instances being recorded.”<sup>182</sup>

He is also not necessarily recognizable when He does visually appear (Luke 24:16, 31, 35; John 20:14; 21:4). Most importantly, an appearing of the Lord does not require that His presence be universally seen; instead, the Lord can sovereignly determine when, to whom, and to what extent He appears. This last point is most readily seen by the post-ascension appearance of the Lord to Paul on the road to Damascus.<sup>183</sup> In Acts 9:7 the men who were with Saul heard the voice but saw no one. They saw the light but did not understand the voice (Acts 22:9). While Saul did not see the physical form of the Lord, the text still states that he had been appointed to see the Righteous One (Acts 22:14; cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). It is also evident that the light to which he was exposed was exponentially brighter than what the others were exposed since he was blinded (Acts 22:11) but they were not (Acts 9:8; 22:11).

Finally, the Lord can appear to specific individuals in a crowd while not appearing to anyone else. Before Stephen was stoned he declared, “Behold, I see the

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<sup>182</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (ed. James A. Swanson; concise ed.; Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 258.

<sup>183</sup> This event was called an appearance by the Lord Himself (Acts 26:16).

heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). The previous verse seems to indicate that he was able to see the Lord because he was “full of the Holy Spirit” (v. 55). There is no indication that he was blinded by the sight.

### ***The Appearance of His Presence (The Posttribulational Appearing)***

The most important text affected by the discussion of the function of ἐπιφάνεια in relation to the παρουσία is 2 Thess 2:8. If the two terms are synonyms then, as several scholars affirm, Paul’s statement in 2 Thess 2:8, “the appearance of His coming (τῆ ἐπιφάνειά τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ),” is pleonastic.<sup>184</sup> A standard lexicon states that this phrase “is pleonastic, since both words have the same technical sense.”<sup>185</sup> Another resource states, “The phrase should possibly be understood as a deliberate tautology, with ἐπιφάνεια focusing perhaps on the powerful and effective action of the returning Christ, and παρουσία on the fact of his reappearance.”<sup>186</sup> As is clear from the preceding lexical study, παρουσία does not principally mean “appearance,” as does ἐπιφάνεια, but “presence with,” especially when the subject is divine. Παρουσία could mean “appearance” if only physical objects were in view because their presence is visible by default. For a divine figure such as the Lord it would have been quite natural to understand His παρουσία as a hidden presence that required some sign or manifestation of His power to declare His presence. It has already been suggested that Paul treats the παρουσία of the Lord as a theophany (cf. 1 Thess 4:14–17) and, therefore, inherently veiled to mortal sight.

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<sup>184</sup> NIDNTTE 4:590.

<sup>185</sup> BAGD, 304.

<sup>186</sup> NIDNTTE 4:590.

Moreover, the Lord's post-ascension appearances were certainly shrouded in divine glory (cf. Acts 9:3–7; 22:6–11).

Hellenistic evidence also provides for a non-pleonastic reading. Deissmann translates an inscription from the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. that records a cure at the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus, “which mentions a parousia of the healer (savior) god Asclepius,” as, “Asclepius manifested his parousia.”<sup>187</sup> The intent of the inscription seems to indicate that the healing was the sign that manifested, or made evident the causative fact, which was the deity's invisible presence. Plevnik, who also denies a pleonastic reading, notes LXX precursors. He states, “The noun ἐπιφάνεια seems to entail the glory of the Lord and the destruction of the evil force at the Lord's coming. It is frequently employed in this sense in 2 Maccabees (2:21; 3:24; 5:4; 12:22; 14:15; 15:27) and 3 Maccabees (2:9; 5:8, 51).”<sup>188</sup> Already mentioned in Part 1 above was Josephus' use of ἐμφανίσαι, a synonym of ἐπιφάνεια, to describe Elisha's request that God would reveal His power and presence (δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν) to his servant. Again, the indication is that the appearing or manifestation is distinct from the παρουσία. It is only in later years, about the time of Paul's writings, that the two could even be used synonymously since as Bultmann and Lührmann note, “Ἐπιφάνεια in the sense of παρουσία is found only from Caligula (37–41 A.D.).”<sup>189</sup> For the divine figure, the παρουσία is invisible and must be manifested (ἐπιφάνεια) for mortals to perceive it.

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<sup>187</sup> Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient Near East*, 374, n. 4.

<sup>188</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 43.

<sup>189</sup> Bultmann and Lührmann, *TDNT* 9:8; cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859, 20 ff.

Other scholars do not accept a pleonastic reading of this text for various reasons, which do not require a detailed discussion here.<sup>190</sup> Bruce, while not offering a fully developed option, nevertheless rejects Paul's phrase as pleonastic on the grounds that *παρουσία* and *ἐπιφάνεια* are not synonyms.<sup>191</sup> Strombeck argues,

Second Thessalonians 2:8 does not refer to the parousia of the Lord but to the *manifestation* thereof. This manifestation is only one aspect of the parousia. The two words "manifestation of" give an entirely different meaning to this passage than it would have if these words had been omitted . . . . In fact, the preposition *of* has even been replaced by the conjunction *and*, to make it read "by the manifestation and *parousia*." This violates the text in the original. It must also be observed that the lawless one shall not be destroyed by the manifestation of the Lord, but by the manifestation of His parousia. It is His presence, subsequent to His arrival, that shall be manifested.<sup>192</sup>

Strombeck's argument allows for the possibility of a different reading, though does not require it. Still, others, like Thomas, likewise reject a pleonastic reading:

Paul's preoccupation with the glory of Christ's return (1:7, 9, 10) supports the rendering of *ἐπιφάνεια* (*epipháneia*) by "splendor." Still, the redundancy that would result in Titus 2:13 where it is used in combination with *δόξα* (*dóksa*, "brightness") more probably excludes the notion of "brightness" from the word. It merely describes the visibility of his *parousia* (coming). The glory of it is frequently described elsewhere.<sup>193</sup>

The view that Paul's phrasing identifies a particular event during the Lord's *παρουσία* is supported by several scholars.<sup>194</sup> Craig Blaising uses this text to explain how the NT can view the rapture and posttribulational appearing as two distinct events within one unified coming. He writes,

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 43, n. 116.

<sup>191</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 172.

<sup>192</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 79 (emphasis in original).

<sup>193</sup> Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," 101, n. 8; cf. W. E. Vine and C. F. Hogg, *Vine's Topical Commentary: Prophecy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 115–40; Isaac M. Haldeman, *The Coming of Christ Both Premillennial and Imminent* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1906).

<sup>194</sup> Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," 54–58; Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," 100–101; Vine and Hogg, *Vine's Topical Commentary: Prophecy*, 71; Haldeman, *The Coming of Christ*, 307–9.

[T]he parousia is linked to the theme of the day of the Lord, because it is the day of the Lord's coming. Just as the day of the Lord is an extended event (the entire tribulation), parousia also carries an extended sense in at least some of its uses. . . . To be sure, he *appears* at the end of the tribulation—that is the purpose of the coming, a purpose for which the metaphor of labor pain is a suitable image. Paul, I think, specifies the posttribulational appearance of this coming more exactly by the phrase “appearance of his coming” (*tē epipháneia tēs parousias autou*; 2 Thess 2:8). But it is not inconsistent with this purpose or with the extended nature of the coming if the Lord were to descend at the onset of the day to rescue the church and prepare them to appear with him at its climax. Because of this, although I distinguish the rapture from the posttribulational descent, I prefer to speak of one future coming, which can be looked at as a whole or from the standpoint of either its onset or its climax.<sup>195</sup>

While a number of scholars may hold that Paul's phraseology is pleonastic, a plausible non-pleonastic reading, which has linguistic and cultural support, seems more likely.

This analysis fits well with the proposed model's view that the Lord's *παρουσία* began earlier to initiate the DL, which Thomas calls the gathering phase of the *παρουσία*,<sup>196</sup> and has been invisible to the inhabitants of the earth. Hogg and Vine link this text with Matt 24:30 saying that it is “the appearance of the Lord in Person, at the ‘shining out of His Parousia.’ That is the sign of the Son of Man.”<sup>197</sup> Only at the end of the period of Daniel's seventieth week, after the lawless one has completed his purpose for which the Lord ordained, will the Lord's *παρουσία* become visible for the entire world to see. The events in this text are therefore parallel to Matt 24:29–31 and Rev 19:11–21.

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<sup>195</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Pretribulation Response,” 248–49.

<sup>196</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 100, writes, “This “appearance” phase of the *parousia* differs from the “gathering” phase (v. 1). It concludes and climaxes the tribulation instead of beginning it. The visible presence of the Lord Jesus in the world will put an immediate stop to an accelerated diabolical program.”

<sup>197</sup> Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, 100.

## Summary and Conclusion

This section presented evidence to support the following points of the proposed model: 1) NT writers continue the OT language of presence-coming and apply that language to the eschatological intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ into human history. 2) The Greek word *παρουσία* has a semantic range that is well suited to continue the OT language of presence-coming. 3) When referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, NT writers use *παρουσία* to refer to the Lord's future intervention in history just as the OT speaks about the presence-coming of God. 4) Therefore, like the OT presence-coming of the LORD, the *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of manifesting His universal sovereignty. 5) During the presence-coming of the Lord, which the NT identifies as the *παρουσία*, the Lord manifests His sovereignty by directing human events for rescue, testing, judgment, salvation, revelation, and wrath. 6) The application of *ἐπιφάνεια* to the postresurrection appearances of the Lord strongly indicates that the mode of His appearances and guidelines of His interaction with the world follows theophanic protocol/precedent.

### **Part 2–The Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Result of His Coming**

Just as the OT did not develop a systematized doctrine of divine revelation neither did the NT. The NT essentially continues the OT understanding of divine revelation as presented in chapter two.<sup>198</sup> There it was argued that revelation can be understood in either a broad or narrow sense. In the broad sense, revelation is the entire process by which the Lord reveals Himself: His decision, His action He performs to reveal Himself, and the result.

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<sup>198</sup> Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” *TDNT* 3:580, writes, “The NT inherits OT revelation. The God of the NT is the same as that of the OT, not in the sense of an absolute identity of conception, but in the sense of a continuity of salvation history. The NT constantly presupposes the OT. This connection is basic to its view of revelation. To a large extent the NT ignores Judaism and goes back direct to the OT itself, especially to the prophets, and very especially to Jer and Deutero Isa.”

In the narrow view, revelation is the effect, of which the coming of the Lord is the cause. In this sense revelation is a historical process by which the Lord reveals Himself when He comes and intervenes in history in accordance with His word. This section will attempt to provide reasonable support for the view that when the NT references the ἀποκάλυψις (“revelation”) of the Lord it is referring to this latter view of revelation.

### Lexical Analysis: The Language of the Revelation of the Lord

Virtually all those in the current debate limit a lexical study to παρουσία, ἀποκάλυψις, and ἐπιφάνεια and essentially treat these terms as synonymous.<sup>199</sup> The Greek word ἀποκάλυψις is used non-technically in the NT and is only one of several words used in the NT to describe the process of divine revelation. The most important for the present discussion are ἀποκαλύπτω (*apokalúptō*, “to reveal”), ἀποκάλυψις (*apokálypsis*, “revelation, unveiling”), and φανερώω (*phaneróō*, “to reveal, make known, show”).<sup>200</sup> Like the OT words used for revelation, these NT words likewise carry a distinctive note of spiritual and intellectual perception of divinely revealed truth.

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<sup>199</sup> Edward E. Hindson, “The Rapture and the Return: Two Aspects of Christ’s Coming,” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, (ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy; Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1995), 153–54, identifies nine terms he says the NT uses to describe the return of Christ; however, he does not provide more than a reference to these terms and where they are found. He concludes, “These terms are often used interchangeably to refer to the rapture or the return of Christ. One cannot build a convincing case for the distinction between the two events merely on the basis of the terms themselves.” Outside of the current debate a study of related words can be found in Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 107–14.

<sup>200</sup> If space permitted, additional words, which have been identified by Oepke, *TDNT* 3:590, as the words the NT uses to depict divine manifestations principally derive from four stems: from γινω (*gínōrizēin*), δηλ (*dhloŷn*), φαν (*phanerōŷn* and *ēμφανίζειν*), and ἀποκαλύπτειν and ἀποκάλυψις; cf. C. F. D. Moule, “Revelation,” *IDB* 4:55.

### *Ἀποκαλύπτω “to Reveal;” Ἀποκάλυψις “Revelation”*

The Greek words ἀποκαλύπτω (*apokalíptō*, “to reveal”) and ἀποκάλυψις (*apokálypsis*, “revelation”) refer to “the act of uncovering” or “revelation.”<sup>201</sup> Theologically, ἀποκάλυψις is simply a manifestation of deity.<sup>202</sup> While ἀποκάλυψις has within its semantic range the capacity to reference a visual element of the manifestation of a person or thing, the word principally connotes the idea of making something known or intellectually perceived that was previously unknown or unknowable.<sup>203</sup> Rather than being principally a function of the sense of sight, it is a function of the intellectual perception. This point is further supported by the fact that even the way Greeks used words that were specifically designed to denote visual perception overlapped a mental perception. Regarding the LXX, Michaelis notes, “In most cases ὄράω does not mean only sense perception as such (as very commonly βλέπω) but also intellectual perception.”<sup>204</sup> Additional meanings that appear frequently in the LXX include the idea of spiritual recognition and perception.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, in the LXX and other ST writings “seeing” has to do with an experience of God’s saving work. Michaelis observes,

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<sup>201</sup> Spicq, “ἀποκάλυψις,” *TLNT* 2:249–50; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:563–92.

<sup>202</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:564.

<sup>203</sup> Spicq, *TLNT* 2:249–50.

<sup>204</sup> Wilhelm Michaelis, “ὄράω, εἶδον, βλέπω, ὀπτάνομαι, θεάομαι, θεωρέω,” *TDNT* 5:324; cf. e.g., Job 13:1; Isa 52:15; Ezek 40:4 (also of God, 4 Βασ. 19:16; 20:5; Isa 37:17; 38:5; Dan 9:18).

<sup>205</sup> Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:325, writes, “ὄράω and εἶδον are often used for spiritual perception. In the sense “to establish,” “to observe,” “to note,” Gen 16:4f.; Exod 8:11; Isa 29:15 (33:11) etc.; almost always in this sense in 1–4 Macc; also of God, Gen 1:4, 8; 7:1; 29:31 f.; Exod 3:7; Deut 9:16; 1 Βασ. 24:16; ψ 52:2; 118:159; Isa 30:19; Jer 23:11, 13 (ἴδε with acc. is common in prayers in the sense “to regard,” “to observe,” sometimes par. with “to hear”: ψ 9:13; 24:18 etc.). In the sense “to recognize,” “to perceive,” Gen 26:28; 37:20; 1 Βασ. 12:17; 2 Εσδρ. 14:5 etc.; also of God, Gen 18:21; ψ 93:7; Isa 59:16, etc. Seeing is often the basis of spiritual perception, though other senses, e.g., hearing, are also mentioned, e.g., Gen 2:19; 42:1; Hab 2:1. Since 𐤒𐤓𐤁, like ὄράω, can include other senses, the LXX follows the Heb. original even when another rendering would have been natural, cf. Exod 20:18; Isa 44:16.”

In verses like Exod 34:10; Deut 3:21; 4:3, 9: 11:7 (cf. Sir 42:15) the ref. is not to the recollection of experiences but seeing God's ἔργα means encounter with the God who is at work in history, cf. Sir 36(33):2; Mic 7:9; Isa 62:2; also Tob 13:17 **Ⲱ**. In ψ 62:2 the aim of visiting the temple is: τοῦ ἰδεῖν τὴν δύναμίν σου καὶ τὴν δόξαν σου (in the Hebrew Text we first have **Ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ Ⲡⲓⲣⲁ**, “in the sanctuary I have seen thee”; . . . If the reference is to proclamation of the saving acts of Yahweh in which His δύναμις is manifest, ψ 62:2 is an example to show that what the righteous see in worship is not subjective. In a passage like Isa 52:10 the parallelism of ἀποκαλύψει κύριος and ὄψονται shows that in such cases man's seeing is complementary to God's revealing.<sup>206</sup>

Based on this analysis, it seems that both ἀποκαλύπτω and ἀποκάλυψις emphasize the spiritual and intellectual perception through the acts of God in history.

Because ἀποκάλυψις is used both of the current and ongoing revelations<sup>207</sup> the word cannot be identified as a technical term for the future coming of the Lord. When ἀποκάλυψις is used in reference to the last days, lexicons generally define the word as indicating the disclosure of secrets belonging to that time.<sup>208</sup>

Finally, and most importantly for the current discussion, when the word is used of present and past revelations, there is a clear identification of the uncovering of truth through the occurrence of historical events. For this reason, when the word is used of the future revelation of the Lord the emphasis is reasonably on the historic events that occur in the future time that specifically bring about the uncovering of some truth with respect to the Lord.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 5:326.

<sup>207</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 3, n. 2, notes, “Elsewhere in the Pauline writings ἀποκάλυψις refers to the present revelations, as in Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 14:6, 26; 2 Cor 12:1, 7; and Gal 1:12; 2:2.”

<sup>208</sup> “ἀποκάλυψις,” BAGD, 92; Spicq, *TLNT* 2:250.

### *Φανερώ “To Manifest, To Reveal, Make Known,” “Show”*

Another word that is often overlooked in the current debate is the word *φανερῶ* (*phanerōō*, “manifested”<sup>209</sup>). Both John and Paul use *φανερῶ* as a virtual synonym with *ἀποκαλύπτω*.<sup>210</sup> Both words are used to demonstrate God’s righteousness through historical intervention in the past.<sup>211</sup> The NT uses *φανερῶ* to describe the giving of divine revelation through God’s intervention in history, and as such, it often refers to the occurrence of events over an extended period of history. For example, the gospel of John uses *φανερῶ* to refer to the revelation of the Lord or to the works of God through historical events (cf. John 1:31; 9:3).<sup>212</sup> While the word’s semantic range does include the notion of visibility, it means specifically, “reveal, make known, show.”<sup>213</sup> Still, the emphasis being expressed when *φανερῶ* is used is the cognitive perception of truth.<sup>214</sup> It could refer to the making “known by word of mouth” or, as in John 17:6, it refers to “the teaching [that] is accompanied by a revelation that comes through the deed.”<sup>215</sup> In 2 Cor 2:14 Paul writes, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests (*φανερῶ*) through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

The point is that the word *φανερῶ* indicates the making known a revelation through any number of media, including personal appearance, word of mouth, deeds

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<sup>209</sup> “*φανερῶ*,” BAGD, 852; “*φαίνω*, *φανερός*, *φανερῶς*, *φανερῶ*, *φανέρωσις*, *φανός*, *φαντάζω*, *φάντασμα*, *ἀναφαίνω*, *ἀφανής*, *ἄφαντος*, *ἐμφανίζω*, *ἐμφανής*, *ἐπιφαίνω*, *ἐπιφάνεια*, *ἐπιφανής*,” *NIDNTTE* 4:585–91.

<sup>210</sup> *NIDNTTE* 4:589.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*; Cf. Rom 1:17 and 3:21; Eph 3:5; Col 1:26 for examples of synonymous usage.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. *NIDNTTE* 4:588–89; cf. Robert H. Gundry, “The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 203–22.

<sup>213</sup> “*φανερῶ*,” BAGD, 852–53.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 853; cf. 2 Cor 11:6; Col 4:4.

being put on display. In those times where the personal appearance may be indicated, the point is often that the truth can only be made known by the appearance of the one through whom the truth is displayed.<sup>216</sup> If Paul uses *φανερώω* and *ἀποκαλύπτω* synonymously,<sup>217</sup> then Paul's reference to the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:7; 2 Thess 1:7) refers not especially to His visible appearing but to the acts that He brings to pass in history that manifest His essential character.

### The Process of Revelation in the NT

The process of divine revelation in the NT occurs in the manner that it occurs in the OT as established in chapter two. The Spirit reveals the word of the Lord to the prophet(s) of the Lord which predicts the future action of the Lord in history (cf. John 16:13). The content of the word of the Lord revealed the coming wrath that had been decreed due to the widespread sin in the land where the Spirit-Presence of the Lord came, which in the current age occurred during the ministry of Jesus Christ. Until the time of Jesus and His public propitiation for sins (Rom 3:25–26), God had “overlooked the times of ignorance.” Now God “is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30–31). The word of the Lord consisted of both the imminent coming of the Lord in judgment wrath upon widespread sin in the land and the way to escape that wrath.

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<sup>216</sup> “*φανερώω*,” BAGD, 852–53; cf. Mark 4:22; John 3:21; 9:3; Rom 3:21; 16:26; 2 Cor 4:10f; 7:12; Eph 5:13f; Col 1:26; 2 Tim 1:10; Heb 9:8; 1 John 4:9; Rev 3:18; 15:4.

<sup>217</sup> Bultmann and Lührmann, *TDNT* 9:4.

### ***The Coming of the Word of the Lord***

The word of the Lord began with the preaching of John the Baptist that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and continued with the preaching of Jesus after He was baptized by the Spirit. Just as John the Baptist preached the word concerning salvation and wrath (Matt 3:7–12) so also Jesus proclaimed the same gospel of the kingdom (Luke 12:1–12; 35–59; cf. Jas 5:9 and compare with 1 Cor 11:26–34 and 16:22). The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:9). Later, Paul declares that according to his gospel “God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” on that day (Rom 2:16).

The word that Jesus spoke will judge them on the last day (John 12:48–50). The word is the determiner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12; cf. Rev 1:16; Is 49:2; Heb 4:12; Rev 2:12, 16; 19:15). Humans are tested by the word (Matt 13:21; Rev 1:9; 6:9) and are judged based on their response to the word (Matt 13:18–23; Rev 1:2–3; 22:18–19). Those who keep His word are blessed (Rev 3:8, 10; 22:7). The testing will come upon the entire world during “the hour of testing” and everyone will be tested by the word of God, which is synonymous with “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 3:8–10). Those who persevere to the end of this testing will be saved, which could mean keeping the faith until death (Rev 2:10–11; 12:11; 20:4) or keeping it until the end of the period of testing for the world. In either case, the end has to do with the end of the testing for the individual. This view is supported by Rev 14:13 where it is stated that those who die in the Lord, i.e. keeping the faith to the end, are blessed because “they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.” In other words they may rest from the testing because their deeds demonstrated that they persevered in the word until the end.<sup>218</sup> They

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<sup>218</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 216–17.

did not endure, physically alive, until the end of the hour of testing upon the world, but they did endure the testing until the end of their lives and are thus saved.

### *The Ἀποκάλυψις of the Lord: An Extended Complex of Events*

Several texts could be noted as referencing the ἀποκάλυψις of the Lord as synonymous with the παρουσία and the day of the Lord (Rom 2:5; 1 Cor 1:7–8; 2 Thess 1:7; cf. Luke 17:30, ἀποκαλύπτω). Many scholars from all views hold that the revelation of the Lord is synonymous with the posttribulational appearing.<sup>219</sup> Evidence favors the view that the ἀποκάλυψις of the Lord refers to the entire period of the coming of the Lord. The word ἀποκάλυψις can also be understood as an extended unified complex of events from at least three texts: Rom 2:5–10; 2 Thess 1:5–10; and Rev 1:1ff. Romans 2:5–10 will be discussed in part four. The other two will be discussed here.

Several scholars have argued that the appearance of ἀποκάλυψις in 2 Thess 1:7 refers to the entire complex of events of the παρουσία. The terms refer to the rest at the rapture, and the affliction “tribulation” that occurs in the 7-year Tribulation.<sup>220</sup> In arguing against the view that 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10 teaches a posttribulation rapture Hultberg writes,

First, . . . , Revelation shows that what Paul seems to present as a single event will actually occur as a complex of events. Second, Paul himself implies a complex of events in 2 Thessalonians 2, as Moo himself admits. . . . He must have thought of it as a complex of events occurring over time. Thus 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10, which includes God’s eschatological wrath, the rapture, and the glorious return of Christ, must be taken as a conflation of the parousia complex into a single depiction. While the rapture and the

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<sup>219</sup> Leon Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 42.

<sup>220</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 310; Thomas Ice, “God’s Coming Judgment,” *Pre-Trib Research Center*, n.p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-GodsComingJudgment.pdf>.

glorious return to earth could still be a simultaneous event within the complex, 2 Thessalonians 1:6–7 does not unambiguously demonstrate that.<sup>221</sup>

Thomas also interprets ἀποκάλυψις in this text as referring to the complex of events beginning with the rapture and including the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord, and the posttribulational appearing of Christ. He writes,

Many have chosen to limit *apokalypsei* (“revelation,” “appearance”) to a single event, identifying it with Christ’s return to earth at the close of the tribulation. The role of “his powerful angels” in the revelation favors this understanding in the light of Matthew 24:30, 31; 25:31. It is more persuasive, however to explain *apokalypsei* as a complex of events, including various phases of end-time happenings. The present context associates the word with Christ’s coming for his own as well as his coming to deal with opponents.<sup>222</sup>

Given, however, that the *παρουσία* of the Lord has been identified as an OT theophany, of which angels are the agents of divine judgment, the appearance of angels in this text does not decrease the likelihood that this refers only to the posttribulational appearance.

Instead, it strengthens it. A parallel to this text can be found in *I En.* 1:4–10. Regarding its use in that text, Plevnik writes, “Here the power of God, the “Great One,” is visible in the powerful army of angels. God comes as a mighty leader of the heavenly army to execute judgment and destroy the evildoers and the sources of evil—the Watchers and their progeny. He comes “with a mighty power.”<sup>223</sup> If the *παρουσία* is a theophany of judgment, and angels are ministers of judgment, then it stands to reason that they would be present from the very beginning and throughout the course of that period of judgment. The repeated reference to angels pouring out divine wrath throughout the period of the Tribulation further establishes this point (cf. Rev 7:1; 8:2; 10:1; etc.).

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<sup>221</sup> Hultberg, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Prewrath Response,” 268.

<sup>222</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 86.

<sup>223</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 52.

The use of ἀποκάλυψις in Revelation 1:1 also indicates that it refers to the entire complex of events of the coming of the Lord, though the word does not always refer to the coming of the Lord. After an analysis determining whether the ἀποκάλυψις of Rev 1:1 is either objective (“the revelation of the person, Jesus Christ) or subjective (the revelation given by Jesus Christ), Thomas concludes the latter. He states, “[I]t refers to data that Jesus Christ was inspired by God to reveal to His servants. Part of that revelation, to be sure, will be His own personal advent in Chapter 19, but that is only a part. The revelation includes all other happenings prior to and subsequent to His own personal appearance.”<sup>224</sup> Thomas’ interpretation is confirmed by the remainder of v. 1, which describes this ἀποκάλυψις as consisting of “the things which must soon take place.” This ἀποκάλυψις is “the word of God” (v. 2) and the “word of prophecy” (v. 3), and the events written in the book will occur in “the time,” which is “near” (v. 3). The reference to “the time” (ὁ καιρὸς) is itself a term packed with eschatological meaning and refers to a significant period of time in which God would visit His people in judgment.<sup>225</sup> Spicq, who takes it to function as an objective genitive, writes,

The first word of the text of the Apocalypse of the apostle and prophet John (*Apokalypsis Iēsou Christou*, Rev 1:1) serves as the title of the work: in it Christ reveals himself, makes himself known, manifests himself as Lord and Redeemer, reigning in heaven and triumphing over Satan’s last assaults on earth. The veil that hides the future is lifted to make known God’s secrets concerning the future, the events of the church’s future as discernable by Christians.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (ed. K. Barker; Chicago: Moody, 1992), 52.

<sup>225</sup> Gerhard Delling, “καιρός, ἄκαιρος, ἀκαιρέω, εὐκαιρος, εὐκαιρία, πρόσκαιρος,” *TDNT* 3:461; cf. Bock, *Luke*, 2:1664.

<sup>226</sup> Spicq, “ἀποκάλυψις,” *TLNT* 2:250.

In either case, scholars have taken the use of the word in Rev 1:1 as directly related to the events contained within the book that transpire within history.

### Summary and Conclusion

The Greek words ἀποκαλύπτω (*apokalíptō*, “to reveal”) and ἀποκάλυψις (*apokálypsis*, “revelation”) were seen to refer to “the act of uncovering” or “revelation” and do not necessarily specify the future παρουσία of the Lord. Another word, φανερόω (*phaneróō*, “manifested”) is used in the NT as a virtual synonym with ἀποκαλύπτω. These words can portray divine revelation from the Lord’s coming at His Incarnation and ministry, His coming via His Spirit after His ascension, as well as His coming during His παρουσία. While these words may have non-religious references, when they refer to the Lord, the Spirit, or God they seem to refer to the knowledge conveyed by God’s acting in history over the course of a period of time. When viewing their use in the future coming of the Lord, there are several texts that also seem to indicate that a period of time in which the Lord acts in history is the cause of the revelation being communicated.

### **Part 3– The Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Purpose of His Coming**

This part will offer a possible interpretation of two key eschatological texts based on the proposed model. This section will examine Revelation 4 and 5 and present the case that these two chapters, which occur prior to the Tribulation, parallel Daniel 7:9–14. Beasley-Murray says, “The coming of God for the saving sovereignty takes place in the *total* intervention of God through the Son of Man/Jesus, and the anticipated events of the Day

of the Lord are concentrated in the acts of God in the death-resurrection-parousia of that same Son of Man.”<sup>227</sup>

### The Coming of the Son of Man with the Clouds of Heaven

A proper understanding of the posttribulational text of Matthew 24:30, “they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” is critical for the proposed model. In His trial before the Sanhedrin, in response to their question whether He was the Messiah, Jesus said, “You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matt 26:64; cf. Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69).

Several important notes should be made. First, these two citations (Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13) are likely technical theological statements, referring to the fulfillment of a spiritual reality, since it is physically impossible for someone to be sitting at a fixed location while also coming.<sup>228</sup> Instead, each citation refers to a different spiritual reality granted to Jesus. Glasson and Robinson argue that these citations refer to the triumph and vindication that was fulfilled in His resurrection and ascension;<sup>229</sup> however, as Beasley-Murray argues, there is nothing in this text that would support this view.<sup>230</sup> The order of citation indicates that the Dan 7:13 text is not fulfilled in the Exaltation and also that it occurs after the Exaltation. Huw P. Owen notes, “That the Exaltation does not fulfill Dan 7:13, but that the fulfillment of the latter will occur after the former, is clear from the order of the

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<sup>227</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 339.

<sup>228</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1800, n. 27.

<sup>229</sup> T. Francis Glasson, *The Second Advent: The Origin of the New Testament Doctrine* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), 64–65; John A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming: Did the Early Church Misinterpret the Original Teaching of Jesus?* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 45. They both continue by discounting any evidence that Jesus referred to His future *parousia*.

<sup>230</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future: An Examination of the Criticism of the Eschatological Discourse, Mark 13, with Special Reference to the Little Apocalypse Theory* (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1954), 91.

quotations; Ps 110:1 comes before Dan 7:13, whereas if the two referred to the same event and if the ‘upward’ movement of Dan 7:13 was to be retained one would expect Dan 7:13 to be quoted before Ps 110:1.”<sup>231</sup>

This view is further supported when the synoptic accounts are compared as well as later citations. While Matthew and Mark are almost identical, Luke’s version omits the reference to Dan 7:13 as well as the note that they would “see” it. Owen writes,

The verb ὄψεσθε addressed to Christ’s enemies must imply the Parousia, when ‘every eye shall see Him, everyone who pierced Him’ (Rev 1:7). Quite apart from the linguistic difficulty of giving the verb a metaphorical sense, the enemies of Christ could not possibly be said to ‘see’ His Exaltation, since this can be ‘seen’ through faith alone by those whose ‘life is hid with Christ in God’ (Col 3:3; 3:1 is an allusion to Ps 110:1). Luke therefore, who evidently wished to confine the saying’s reference to the Exaltation, omitted not only ἐρχόμενον but also ὄψεσθε.<sup>232</sup>

Luke indicates a definite present action, “From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” From now on, immediately, regardless whether anyone sees it or not, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God. A comparison with Acts 1:9–11 (cf. Acts 2:33–36) implies that Psalm 110:1 is fulfilled in His ascension whereas His coming with the clouds will be fulfilled in His παρουσία when He comes from heaven to manifestly subjugate all power to Himself (1 Cor 15:23–28).

The fact that His coming with the clouds was not fulfilled immediately either at His ascension or at Pentecost is seen by the lack of parallel citing in other places. Several NT texts indicate that Christ is currently seated at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33–36; 7:55–56; Col 3:1), but they do not cite Dan 7:13. In Revelation 1:7–8, which provides teaching on the future coming of the Lord (22:7), John omits the “sitting”

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<sup>231</sup> Huw P. Owen, “The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” *SJT* 12 (1959), 174.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

and emphasizes the “coming,” which he says is still in the future. Likewise, Matt 24:30 cites Dan 7:13 but omits Ps 110:1.

From these texts, it seems that the Son of Man is currently sitting by the right hand of God but not yet coming with the clouds of heaven. His coming with the clouds will occur in the future, which is His *παρουσία*. These two citations seem to indicate two distinct periods of time regarding Christ’s relation to the earth. His current role is sitting at the right hand of Power and waiting until the time when His enemies are made His footstool. His future role, also a period of time, will be His coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days when He is granted permission to commence the subjugation of all things to Himself. The need for Him to be granted permission from the Father to perform this subjugation does not indicate He lacks any authority. He has already been given authority, power, and glory by which He will perform the subjugation, which is indicated by His exaltation to the right hand of Power.<sup>233</sup> The ability to even come with the clouds to the throne of God indicates He has the power because coming with the clouds is a well-known theophanic marker for divinity. His need to be granted permission merely reflects the fact that the times and seasons have always been under the purview of God the Father (Matt 24:36; Acts 1:6–7). Paul identifies this time of subjugation as His *παρουσία* (1 Cor 15:23–28).

Second, the Sanhedrin took His statement to indicate that God would grant Him theophanic glory, dominion, and power to execute judgment. Niehaus writes,

The stumbling block for the Sanhedrin was Jesus’ prophecy that they would see his eschatological return (Matt 26:64b; Mark 14:62b). Jesus portrayed that return as an Old Testament glory theophany of Yahweh—

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<sup>233</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1800–01.

an application the Sanhedrin thought gave them ample warrant for crying, “Blasphemy!”

Messiah’s eschatological return echoes the way God first came to Adam and Eve in the garden once they had sinned (Gen 3:8). Whenever God came in glory in the Old Testament, he came in that way: partly revealed in flashes of light and thunderous voice, partly concealed in dark cloud. Every such theophany was a judgment because the advent of light judges the darkness (cf. John 3:19–20). At the eschaton that judgment par excellence will take place of which all Old Testament glory theophanies—however powerful and glorious—are only a foreshadowing.<sup>234</sup>

From Niehaus’ own statements, the eschatological theophany will be like the OT where there is partial revealing in flashes of light and partial concealing by the clouds. This revealing and concealing is perfectly illustrated by Matt 24:27, which critics usually insist is the posttribulational appearing (vv. 29–31);<sup>235</sup> however, in v. 30 (and parallel citations<sup>236</sup>), the emphasis is on the unmistakable appearance of the full glory of the Son of Man. By contrast, in Matt 24:27 the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man is compared to the OT theophany of revelation in the midst of concealment by clouds, particularly to the revelation of divine judgment.<sup>237</sup> Willoughby C. Allen writes concerning this verse, “Luke has: ‘For as the lightning, when it flashes from the one part under the heaven shines to the other part under the heaven, so shall be the Son of Man.’ The idea apparently is that the presence of the Son of Man will be not local, but everywhere visible. See on Luke 17:24, 37.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 367.

<sup>235</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 194.

<sup>236</sup> Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Rev 1:7.

<sup>237</sup> See Deuteronomy 32:39–41, where the connection is made between the wrath of God due to a broken covenant, His lifting of His hand in declaration of judgment, His flashing sword to render vengeance and retribution upon His enemies and avenging the blood of His servants. Cf. Exod 9:24 (This text is an important parallel since it parallels many other elements of Matthew 24); Dan 10:6; Hab 3:4, 11; Deut 33:2, 40–41; Job 36:26–33; 37:1ff; Ps 18:14; Ezek 21:10, 15, 28; Hos 6:5; Amos 5:9.

<sup>238</sup> Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (ICC 26; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 257.

At this point there are several significant observations that need to be noted so that the coming with clouds in 1 Thessalonians 4 and the posttribulational texts do not negate the proposed model. First, in every NT citation of Daniel’s text, a specific reference is made that those on earth will see it, which is not included in Daniel. Second, while most critics assume that these texts refer to His descent from heaven to earth, which they equate with Acts 1:11 and 1 Thess 4:14–17,<sup>239</sup> none of the texts make this clear. Bruce writes concerning 1 Thess 4:14–17, “Similarly it is not certain whether the Son of Man, coming ‘in clouds’ (Mark 13:26 par.; 14:62 par.), is on his way to earth or (as in Dan 7:13) to the throne of God.”<sup>240</sup> In Dan 7:13 the one like a son of man is coming with the clouds to the Ancient of Days and not the earth.<sup>241</sup> Some still argue that Daniel’s text is a descent to earth, which is where the chariot-throne of God is at that time for judgment.<sup>242</sup> While the Son of Man may be descending to earth, He is nevertheless moving to the throne of God and not to the earth because He must receive dominion from God before He can return to earth (cf. Dan 7:14). As Mowinckel states, “[I]n the vision it is God who assigns dominion to him; and, therefore, he must be presented before the Ancient of Days.”<sup>243</sup> In Daniel this figure is never seen to leave the heavenly realm.

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<sup>239</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 194.

<sup>240</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 103; cf. George Milligan, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 61.

<sup>241</sup> Owen, “The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” 173–74.

<sup>242</sup> Concerning Jesus’ citation of this text in Mark 14:62, Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark Thirteen*, 91, writes, “Despite the fact that this view is becoming almost a new orthodoxy in Britain, I am convinced that it cannot stand, for: (i) no change of scene from earth to heaven is suggested in Dan 7:9, the earthly sphere of imperial rule is in view all the time; (ii) the divine chariot is that described by Ezekiel, which served for the appearance of God on earth; (iii) no hint is given in Dan 7 that the ‘saints’ are translated to heaven, there to rule over the earth; (iv) it is distinctly stated in Dan 7:22 that the Ancient of Days *came*, i.e., to earth, for the purpose of judgment and deliverance. . . . Neither in Daniel nor in the teaching of Jesus is there any ground for thinking that our passage and Mark 14:62 relate to anything other than a Parousia to humanity on earth.”

<sup>243</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 352.

Based on this data, the proposed model would suggest the following sequence of events. First, 1 Thess 4:14–17 was shown to likely be a theophany and refers to the presence-coming of the Lord veiled in a storm-cloud theophany. Second, Daniel never says the Son of Man left heaven or was seen by any earth dweller. Because all NT citations add a note of “seeing” to the quotation, it seems reasonable that the NT citations are referencing an event that is veiled in the heavenly dimension and that NT writers recognize that heaven must be opened for it to be visible (cf. Rev 4:1; 19:11; also 1 Thess 4:16). Third, the depiction of the Ancient of Days and His throne, as well as those of the ones around Him, which must be set up (v. 9), indicates that it is a chariot-throne theophany.<sup>244</sup> The chariot-throne moves to earth whenever He comes in judgment or to exercise His sovereignty over the earth (Dan 7:9–12; cf. Ezek 1; 8:1–6; 9; 10; 11:23–24). His glory being veiled by the storm-cloud that surrounds the chariot-throne.<sup>245</sup>

At the right time (Matt 24:36; Acts 1:7; 1 Thess 5:1–2), the chariot-throne of God, where sits the Ancient of Days, will descend toward the earth, setting up the heavenly court (Rev 4:1ff.), bringing “with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (1 Thess 4:14). The Lord also will be descending with God since His Father has granted Him to sit down with Him on His throne (Rev 3:21), and He is currently in the midst of the throne (Rev 5:6). The descent will be the inaugural event of the *παρουσία* of the Lord (1 Thess 4:15–17). The Lord will descend from heaven veiled with the theophanic storm-cloud of God since the chariot-throne upon which He sits is shrouded by that storm-cloud.<sup>246</sup> At some point during the descent the Lord will resurrect and rapture believers up into those storm-clouds that conceal the chariot-throne of God. They are then presented before the

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 344–50, and 378–79.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861.

Father as blameless (1 Thess 5:23) in the presence of the Lord at His *παρουσία* (2:19; 3:13).

Sometime after this presentation, the Son of Man is deemed worthy (Rev 5:5), presumably on the basis of His redemptive power (vv. 9–14), to receive glory, honor, and dominion (Rev 5:5–10). When He is declared worthy to take the scroll (vv. 4–5), the text reads, “He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” (v. 7). James M. Hamilton, Jr. writes,

While John does show Jesus being presented before the Ancient of Days in fulfillment of Daniel 7 in Revelation 5, in Revelation 1 the imagery of Daniel 7:13 appears in references to Jesus going somewhere other than to be presented before the Ancient of Days. This creative development affirms that the Son of Man’s mode of travel is the same as Yahweh’s, on the clouds of heaven (e.g. Ps 104:3; cf. Acts 1:9–11).<sup>247</sup>

Immediately all of heaven erupts in praise and declarations of worthiness to the Lamb (vv. 8–14).

The first subsequent act of the Lord is the opening of the first seal in Revelation 6:1, which begins the Tribulation. It is His first act to begin subjugation of the earth. Revelation 5:7, when He comes and takes the scroll from Him who sits on the throne, is therefore conceptually parallel as Dan 7:13. It is not until Rev 19:11, after the Tribulation and after all His actions as Sovereign and Judge, that heaven is opened, and mortals see Him coming.

Because the phrase “the Son of Man coming with the clouds” is a technical phrase that best refers to His coming to the throne to be granted dominion and not to His descent

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<sup>247</sup> James M. Hamilton, Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology* (ed. D. A. Carson; NSBT 32; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 208–9. On p. 209, he writes, “Daniel 7:14 declared that the son of man would receive the kingdom and that his kingdom would never be destroyed or pass away. John depicts the fulfillment of that prophecy in Revelation 11:15, when the announcement is made at the seventh trumpet that Christ is King, ‘and he shall reign for ever and ever’ (cf.

to earth,<sup>248</sup> it is to be taken abstractly rather than literally. In other words, at the end of the Tribulation, all who are left on the earth will recognize intellectually that the Son of Man has been granted authority by His coming with the clouds to the throne of God. His revelation as Lord will at this point be complete because all historical events by which His sovereignty was to be made universally known will have been fulfilled. This view does not negate His physical return, which is assured by Acts 1:11 and Rev 19:11. It merely affirms that His physical return is not referenced by His coming with the clouds. Instead, the first part of the verse, “the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky” (v. 30) may be a reference to the visual sight of His glory.<sup>249</sup> Unbelievers will “see” in the sense of perceive intellectually rather than visually. They have been made to see the reality of His sovereignty by the previous seven years of His *παρουσία* when He judged and executed wrath upon the earth in perfect accord with His previously revealed word; specifically, the word of the Lord revealed as the book of Revelation.

### Summary and Conclusion

This section presented evidence for viewing the phrase in Matt 24:30, “the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven,” as a technical phrase, synonymous with the *parousia*, that refers to the period of time when the Lord begins to demonstrably exercise His sovereignty through direct historical intervention. The image of “coming with clouds” naturally emphasizes the beginning of that period, since that event inaugurates it, but the entire period that results in that “coming” is in view. The Lord is presently enthroned with God the Father, the Ancient of Days, which is expressed by multiple NT

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also e.g. Dan 2:44; 1 Cor 15:24).” Hamilton also notes that Dan 7:18 is fulfilled in Rev 22:5; Dan 7:21–22, 27 is fulfilled in Rev 13:7.

<sup>248</sup> Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 267; Wright, *Victory*, 344.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. A. J. B. Higgins, “The Sign of the Son of Man (Matt 24:30),” *NTS* 9 (1964): 381.

references to Ps 110:1<sup>250</sup> as well as a direct statement from the glorified Lord (Rev 3:21). At the parousia, Dan 7:13 will then be fulfilled, which is portrayed in Revelation 5 when the Lord Jesus Christ, who is already in the midst of the throne (v. 6),<sup>251</sup> comes and takes the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sits on the throne (v. 5–10). It is at that time that the Son of Man comes in glory and sits upon His glorious throne to begin judging the earth (Matt 25:31). Beginning in Rev 6:1 the Lamb's direct intervention in history is portrayed by the act of His breaking the seals of the scroll, which unleashes various events of judgment upon the world. In so doing, the Lord begins to directly intervene in history and manifest His sovereignty in the earth (cf. Rev 11:15, 17). From Revelation 6–19 the Lord invisibly intervenes in history to test, judge, and execute that judgment upon the earth in a manner that parallels the OT presence-coming of the LORD. Only at the end of that time of His invisible intervention will heaven be opened such that the Lord is seen by all, which is portrayed in Revelation 19:11–21.<sup>252</sup> Then the Lord will become visibly manifest to the world and they will see His sovereignty (Matt 24:30; Rev 19:19) as manifest glory (cf. 2 Thess 2:8).

#### **Part 4—The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ: The Appointed Time of His Coming**

The NT teaching concerning the DL, like the coming, revelation, and appearing of the Lord key facets in the interpretive key of eschatology. History has always and continues to function as the stage upon which divine revelation occurs. By sovereign decision the

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<sup>250</sup> Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 7:55–56; cf. Jer 14:21; 17:12; Exod 24:16.

<sup>251</sup> The NASB gives in a note the literal reading of this text as, “And I saw *in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the middle of the elders* a Lamb standing, . . .”

<sup>252</sup> Heaven is opened up in Rev 4:1 in which John is taken by the Spirit into heaven at the command of the One whose voice is like a trumpet (cf. Rev 1:10). In Acts 7:55–56 Stephen sees heaven opened up but there is no indication that anyone else sees it. This fact implies that the opening of heaven does not require that everyone see it. It could be that only the righteous see it or that only those to whom the Lord grants this sight sees it (cf. Acts 10:40).

Lord comes, which is His direct intervention in human history. This intervention occurs in accordance with His prophetic word, and it establishes that word. The period of this coming is known as the day of the Lord.<sup>253</sup>

### The Παρουσία, the Day of the Lord, and the Tribulation

The most significant oversight by critics in the current debate regarding the timing of the coming of the Lord and the DL could likely be identified as the incorrect identification of the DL as only the period when the Lord executes His wrath.<sup>254</sup> Indeed that day will be a day of wrath (Rom 2:5; Rev 6:12–17); however, that will neither be its central purpose nor its chief characteristic. This error has led critics to place the DL after the Tribulation<sup>255</sup> and prewrath rapture advocates to place it as sometime after the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15).<sup>256</sup> Prewrath advocates argue that the DL is only the last three and a half year period that is in view in “Tribulation” prophecies (cf. Dan 7:21, 25; 12:1; Rev 13:7).<sup>257</sup> Hultberg particularly distinguishes the sixth seal from the first five where the first five are “normal” catastrophes and the sixth is the beginning of the day of judgment (Rev 6:17) and parallel to Matt 24:29–31.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Clarence E. Mason Jr., “The Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” *BSac* 125 (1968), 356, adds the phrase “who is God” to the phrase “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8), to bring in references to the day of God, or of Jehovah (2 Pet 3:12; cf. Rev 16:14). He notes that this phrase is the full composite title of the end of the age which includes: “Day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10), “Day of God” (2 Pet 3:12), “Day of Christ” (Phil 1:10; 2:16), “Day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6), “Day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14), and is synonymous with “the Days of Vengeance” (Luke 21:22), “the Day of Judgment” (Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; 2 Pet 3:7; 1 John 4:17), “the Last Day” (John 6:44), “the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5), “Day of Visitation” (1 Pet 2:12), and “the Great Day of Judgment” (Rev 6:17; cf. Jude 6; Rev 16:14). Cf. pp. 352–59; The “day of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:30) should also be added into Mason’s formula. Cf. Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views* (2010), 202, n. 25, who notes there are eighteen different expressions of this one “day.” Cf. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 97–99.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” 147.

<sup>255</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” (2010), 187–94.

<sup>256</sup> Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” 147.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–48.

<sup>258</sup> Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” 146.

This misidentification appears to stem from a hermeneutic that places prominence on the DL rather than the coming of the Lord since in most prophetic texts the DL is described mostly by theophanic judgment imagery. As chapter two suggested, the chief characteristic of the DL is not the outpouring of wrath but the revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord through His presence-coming. The foundation of proper interpretation of the eschatological sequence of events is not a biblical theology of the DL but of the coming of the Lord. Just as salvation occurred at the coming of the Lord in the Incarnation so likewise the consummation will occur at the coming of the Lord during His *παρουσία*. DL is inaugurated by the *παρουσία* rather than the *παρουσία* occurring on the DL.<sup>259</sup> The Lord first comes to assess the situation on earth (Luke 18:8),<sup>260</sup> and then, after His initial judgment (i.e., assessment) through testing, He begins to reveal His righteous judgment through progressively intensifying wrath upon those who have demonstrated themselves to be unrighteous.

### ***The Presence-Coming (Παρουσία) of the Lord and His Historical Intervention***

Correctly noting that the future period is inaugurated by the *παρουσία* rather than the DL establishes first of all that the Tribulation is a period of the revelation of both the Lord and humankind. The Lord comes to reveal His sovereignty and righteousness through judgment. The only way that the Lord can reveal His righteous judgment is if it is evident

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<sup>259</sup> Note Paul's order in 1 Thess 4:14–5:3. Paul teaches the occurrence of the *παρουσία* in Ch 4, then teaches on the day of the Lord in Ch 5. This order is followed in 2 Thess 1:5–10 where *ἀποκάλυψις* is used as the synonym of *παρουσία*. The Lord is revealed (*ἀποκάλυψις*) from heaven (by His *παρουσία*) (v. 7), which occurs “on that day” (v. 10). In 2 Thess 2:1 Paul discusses the *παρουσία* and gathering (the rapture) and then discusses the DL (vv. 2–12). The order may be merely coincidental, but it is a regular order of discussion of these elements in several texts (cf. 1 Cor 1:7–8; 2 Pet 1:16–18; 3:4; 10–12).

<sup>260</sup> The notion that the Lord first comes to assess before rendering a judgment and then executing wrath according to His judgment is a theme in the OT. See Isa 59:15–21; Ezekiel 8; 22:30; cf. Isa 41:28; 63:5.

to all that those He judged to be righteous are seen by all to have performed righteous deeds. Likewise, those He judges to be wicked must be seen by all to have performed wicked deeds. This period is for the express purpose of demonstrating His righteous judgment (Rom 2:5) by rendering to each according to his work (v. 6). Since the true inner person is hidden to others, the Lord's righteousness will only be revealed if He reveals the hidden secrets of the heart.

Secondly, the Tribulation is a period of worldwide testing (Rev 3:10) whereby He reveals in the viewing of all the secrets of each person's thoughts. The Lord will bring about worldwide testing when He comes by sending false peace, then distress, false prophets, false revelation, signs, wonders, and the false messiah, all of which will force everyone to make moral choices that reveal the true nature of their hearts (cf. Rev 13:8; Matt 12:34–37). Once the world has made its choice the harvest can begin, which is the outpouring of divine wrath (Rev 14:14–20; cf. vv. 6–13).

Chapter two suggested that a basic activity of the Lord when He comes is to test the people with whom He dwells; therefore, before the wrath of the DL can commence there must, of necessity, first be a period of testing. As with the OT presence-coming of the LORD (Deut 13:1–5), the first act of the Lord when His *παρουσία* begins is to send false prophets and false christs performing signs and wonders (Rev 6:1–2; 13:3–15 Matt 24:4–6, 10–11, 23–26; 2 Thess 2:9–12; cf. Deut 13:1–18) to determine if the people will obey Him and His word (Rev 6:9; 13:9–10, 18; Matt 24:4, 9, 13–14, 16–20, 25; cf. Deut 13:3). Additionally, there is evidence that due to the rejection of the gospel, the word of God, in this current age that God will also send strong delusion upon those who “did not

receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess 2:11).<sup>261</sup> The reason He sends this delusion is “in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness” (v. 12).<sup>262</sup>

The righteous judgment of the Lord is then revealed through the execution of His wrath upon those who demonstrate themselves to be unrighteous. Revelation 16:5 says, “And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments” (Rev 16:5–7). Nevertheless, it is repeatedly stated in response to these judgments, “and they did not repent so as to give Him glory” (Rev 16:9, 11), and “men blasphemed God because of the plague” (Rev 16:9, 11, 20). It should be noted, however, contra Hultberg, that the first five seals in Revelation 6 are all identified in the OT as the wrath of God. Theophanic imagery is not needed either to establish the coming of the Lord or the occurrence of the DL.<sup>263</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

This section presented the day of the Lord as the period in which the *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ began. It is the period in which He comes to directly intervene in history through the opening of the scroll, which is the word of the Lord for testing, judgment, and wrath. His intervention during the day of the Lord will manifest His

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<sup>261</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 101–102.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> During the OT from the time of the Exodus to the Babylonian captivity the Lord was present in the midst of Israel assessing the deeds of the people. Only when the sin of the nation reached a climax does

sovereignty through His control and execution of events in accord with the previously proclaimed word of the Lord. Most importantly, the righteousness of the Lord will be demonstrated as the wicked fail the tests that the Lord sends via Satan and the antichrist, which demonstrate that His judgment wrath upon them is justly deserved.

### **Part 5–Potential Objection: Events Preceding the Day of the Lord and His Coming**

The most significant objection to the proposed model could be that a number of texts appear to indicate that certain identifiable events or signs must occur before the day of the Lord, and therefore, before the coming of the Lord. These principal signs include: 1) the apostasy and the *παρουσία* of the man of lawlessness (Matt 24:15–31; 2 Thess 2:2–8); 2) cosmic upheavals (Joel 2:28–32, Acts 2:17–21, and Matthew 24:29–31); and, 3) the coming of Elijah (Malachi 4:5). The following discussion will attempt to provide a reasonable response to each. One other sign that is potentially problematic for the proposed model is the preaching of the gospel to the world (Matt 24:14);<sup>264</sup> however, the proposed model understands the completion of this sign to occur after the *παρουσία* has begun but before the end of the Tribulation and glorious posttribulational appearing of the Lord.

#### The Apostasy and the *Παρουσία* of the Lawless One (2 Thessalonians 2:2–12)

The first objection to the proposed model arises from 2 Thessalonians 2 (cf. Matt 24:15–31). Most scholars hold that Paul teaches that at least two events, the apostasy and the revelation of the man of lawlessness, must transpire “first” before the day of the Lord can

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the Lord’s glory-presence depart the temple and the city. The glory of God mounts the chariot-throne and moves outside the city to the mountain to the east to oversee the destruction of the city (cf. Ezek 8–11).

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Benjamin L. Merkle, “Could Jesus Return at Any Moment? Rethinking the Imminence of the Second Coming,” *TJ* 26 (2005): 280.

“come” (vv. 2–3).<sup>265</sup> Prewrath advocates typically agree with critics on this point.<sup>266</sup>

Since it is agreed by all that the *παρουσία* and the day of the Lord are contemporaneous, and the rapture occurs at the *παρουσία* (1 Thess 4:15–17; 2 Thess 2:1), this objection is easily the most significant since it places the day of the Lord, the *παρουσία*, and the rapture (gathering, v. 1) at the end of the Tribulation.<sup>267</sup>

The difficulties in interpreting this text are well known.<sup>268</sup> First, Paul’s teaching here is admittedly partial, and rather than fully explaining himself he relies on verbal teaching, which is no longer accessible (v. 5). Second, the key statement of the text regarding the timing of the day of the Lord is not a complete sentence.<sup>269</sup> Third, the identity of the restrainer who holds back the revealing of the lawless one is unclear.<sup>270</sup> Because most English translations render these verses in favor of viewing this event posttribulationally, this text has been a significant impediment to the pretribulation position. The following presentation will attempt to propose a lexically and exegetically defensible interpretation that answers the critics’ objection while also significantly supporting the proposed model.

### ***The Problem of Explaining the Thessalonians’ Anxiety (v. 2)***

Scholars from all viewpoints have attempted to use the fact of the Thessalonians’ anxiety to support their view. If the *parousia*/DL is a simple, or singular, cataclysmic event that immediately ended the current world order in universal divine wrath and inaugurated the

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<sup>265</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder,” (2010), 273; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 166, 175;

<sup>266</sup> Hultberg, “A Case for the Prewrath Rapture,” (2010), 117–28.

<sup>267</sup> Moo, “Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 189.

<sup>268</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 165–66;

<sup>269</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94; cf. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 166.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 98–99.

kingdom then there is little room for the Thessalonians to be worried that it had occurred.<sup>271</sup> Several commentators feel it necessary to translate ἐνέστηκεν (*enestēken*, lit. “is present”<sup>272</sup>) as “‘to be about to take place’ on the grounds that it is inconceivable that the Thessalonians could have believed that the DL had actually arrived as this would have entailed the coming of the Lord, something that had clearly not happened.”<sup>273</sup>

Wanamaker, also attempting to make sense of the logical contradiction, explains,

It is difficult to know in what sense the Thessalonians may have thought that the day of the Lord had come, since clearly the coming of Jesus at the end of the age could not have happened. Perhaps, . . . , they understood the day of the Lord not merely as the day of Jesus’ parousia from heaven, but in a general way as the events of the end of the age. Possibly it was connected with their experience of oppression, but the text does not make this clear.<sup>274</sup>

This view assumes that the DL and *παρουσία* comprise a momentary, singular event that brings about the immediate dissolution of the present world order and ushers in the kingdom. Wright rejects this view, noting,

When Paul, or an early imitator, speaks of a coming day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:2), the passage cannot be referring to the end of the space-time universe. It envisages the possibility that the Thessalonians might hear of the great event by *letter*. This is a key index of the this-worldly referent of ‘apocalyptic’ language within early Christianity, as within Judaism.<sup>275</sup>

Wright’s view is in agreement with the proposed model, which is that the DL and *παρουσία* represent the Lord’s immanent, invisible (or veiled) intervention in history. The day of the Lord is thus a period of time that either is present, i.e. “occurring now,” or not.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>273</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 240.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>275</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 460.

Regarding the Thessalonians' anxiety a second problem also arises by assuming a simple, momentary DL. The Thessalonians' anxiety seems to assume that they believe that when the DL is present there will not be less persecution and tribulation, but more. If this assumption is not valid, then why would they believe they were in the day, or, if they were, why were they upset? Paul stated clearly in 1:5–7 that they would receive rest while the world received distress, which he indicates in 2:5 is all part of his previous teaching. This problem is compounded if the *παρουσία* and DL are held to be cotemporaneous. Why would the Thessalonians be under great distress if the parousia/DL was either present or “about to take place”? Paul already affirmed that they would be given rest and their oppressors would be given distress when the Lord is revealed from heaven in that day (1:10) and that that event was to be eagerly awaited (1 Cor 1:7, 8).

In contrast to these commentators, the Thessalonians' anxiety is easily reconciled by the proposed model. If the church had been taught that the parousia/DL is an extended complex of events that begins peacefully and quietly, with only believers aware of its beginning by being raptured, and that subsequently brings about intense worldwide Tribulation, then the Thessalonians had every right to be alarmed if they had received teaching that the DL was present and they were still mortal. No commentator has been found to draw attention to this fact and explain how the Thessalonians could have missed the day if they, and all believers, are of the day and that day shall not overcome them as a thief (1 Thess 5:4). If, as critics maintain, that being of the day merely keeps one from being caught off-guard by the DL,<sup>276</sup> then why does Paul not simply tell them they should know they were not in the day because they are children of the day?

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<sup>276</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74; cf. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 206–12; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 29–43.

### ***The Day of the Lord “is Present” (v. 2)***

In v. 2 Paul immediately transitions to the purpose of his letter, which concerned correcting the false teaching that the DL was then present. Several English translations introduce an error beginning in this verse, which has impact on the translation of v. 3.<sup>277</sup> These English translations render the verb ἐνέστηκεν as “has come,” “about to come,” or “imminent.” Kelly writes of the mistranslation of the verb ἐνέστηκεν:

The mistranslation of the verb is far more important, because it falsifies the bearing of the passage, from which even those who correct it find it difficult to recover. The word ἐνέστηκεν means “is present” and nothing else. The true sense seemed so unintelligible, if not incredible, to translators and commentators, that they gave the quite different meaning of “is at hand,” or “imminent.” Many of these could not be ignorant that the same tense in the N.T. imports elsewhere definitely and invariably “present”; see Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 3:22; 7:26; Gal 1:4; and Heb 9:9. In all these it unequivocally expresses the then present, repeatedly even in distinct contrast with “at hand” as future, no matter how near.<sup>278</sup>

Some commentators correctly take ἐνέστηκεν to be “is present.”<sup>279</sup> Bruce writes, “It cannot be seriously disputed that ‘is present’ is the natural sense of ἐνέστηκεν.”<sup>280</sup>

### ***The Day of the Lord “Will Not Be Present Unless” (v. 3)***

Significant translation and interpretation problems begin in v. 3 because here Paul’s sentences are incomplete. There is no verb in v. 3 of the Greek text so translators universally supply a verb for clarity that states, “for it will not come unless . . . .” Paul

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<sup>277</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94–95.

<sup>278</sup> William Kelly, *The Coming, and the Day, of the Lord: 2 Thessalonians II: 1, 2* (London: T. Weston, 53, Paternoster Row, E.C., 1903), 20–21.

<sup>279</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94–95; Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 245; Kelly, *The Coming, and the Day, of the Lord*, 20; Wanamaker in at least one place acknowledges that Paul’s argument is to refute the notion that the day of the Lord “was already present.” Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 240.

<sup>280</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 165.

then appears to be saying that the DL will not come until first comes the apostasy and the revealing of the lawless one.<sup>281</sup>

By contrast, if ἐνέστηκεν is rendered “is present” in v. 2, then the correct rendering of the supplied apodosis would be, “for it will not be present unless . . . .”<sup>282</sup>

Mason writes,

The persecution and trouble through which you are now passing, though exceedingly severe, must not be mistaken for that unparalleled period of wrath and tribulation (the seventieth week) which is going to come on the earth after the church is translated. Let no one deceive you that you are now present in the day of the Lord (vs. 2). That day cannot be asserted to be present until there come first ‘the falling away’ (or departing) and, second, the manifestation of the man of sin (vs. 3). Since these events have not yet come, plainly you are *not* in the day of the Lord.<sup>283</sup>

Best likewise translates similarly. He states, “We therefore assume that the anacoluthon of vv. 3f. is to be completed with a recasting of the words of v. 2c, viz. ‘the day of the Lord will not be present.’”<sup>284</sup> Thomas concurs,

His [Paul’s] proof of the day’s nonpresence consists of citing two phenomena that had not yet occurred. The text does not explicitly say whether these will come before the day of the Lord or immediately after it begins, because the Greek sentence is not complete, but it presupposes something to be added from the previous verse; i.e., “that day will not come” (NIV) or “that day is not present” (cf. note). Grammatically similar constructions elsewhere (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; John 7:51; Rom 15:24) show these two happenings are conceived of as within the day of the Lord, not prior to it. The day of the Lord had not yet arrived because these two conspicuous phenomena that will dominate the day’s opening phase had not yet happened.<sup>285</sup>

The force of this translation changes the intent of events that Paul mentions from being precursors that must transpire before that day can come to being events that can only

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<sup>281</sup> Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 247.

<sup>282</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94–95;

<sup>283</sup> Mason, “The Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” 359. This argument is further expanded by Robert L. Thomas, “Imminence in the NT, Especially Paul’s Thessalonian Epistles,” *MSJ* 13 (2002): 209–12.

<sup>284</sup> Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 281.

<sup>285</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94; Mason’s and Thomas’ exegesis is supported by Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 55–58; cf. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 166.

transpire when that day is present. It seems reasonable that if this antecedent verb to which Paul is referring is ἐνέστηκεν, “is present,” in v. 2, then the most natural and logical reading of v. 3 would be “that day will not be present unless . . .” Very few commentators and scholars reject this translation, which indicates that they are either not aware or do not consider this translation; therefore, it is an oversight rather than a rejection. If the former, then the proposed translation of “will not be present” is not outright rejected.

The word πρῶτον (“first”) is usually taken to refer to the notion that the two events Paul lists, the apostasy and the revealing of the lawless one, occur “first,” as in before the day of the Lord comes.<sup>286</sup> Posttribulationists often use this text as the foundation of their view.<sup>287</sup> By contrast, Thomas notes that “first” could also “mean that the coming of the apostasy precedes the revelation of the man of lawlessness, both being within the day of the Lord.”<sup>288</sup> Using this analysis the sense of this verse becomes: “The day of the Lord is not present unless first in sequence within that day the apostasy comes, and following the apostasy’s beginning, the revealing of the man of lawlessness occurs.”<sup>289</sup> Thomas also cites a similar grammatical construction in John 7:51 and Mark 3:27, both of which support his rendering.<sup>290</sup> Blaising argues for a similar view and renders the sense as, “For that day would not be here unless there was first the

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<sup>286</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 168; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 519.

<sup>287</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *First the Antichrist: A Book for Lay Christians Approaching the Third Millennium and Inquiring Whether Jesus Will Come to Take the Church Out of the World Before the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 20; Millard Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 175.

<sup>288</sup> Thomas, “Imminence in the NT,” 210–11.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

apostasy.”<sup>291</sup> Both Blaising and Thomas cite Charles Giblin who also rejects the traditional interpretation of this text.<sup>292</sup>

The proposed model also supports this view. Blaising writes,

At this point, the interpreter makes a choice influenced by a broader, contextual understanding of the subject matter. The view chosen here fits with what we have seen as a developed notion of the day of the Lord as a complex event *containing* the elements Paul is highlighting and the tradition extending from the Olivet Discourse to 1 Thessalonians 5 that the day of the Lord *begins without signs*.<sup>293</sup>

Critics nevertheless object saying that Paul’s method of argumentation here implies that the Thessalonians would see the events he lists as evidence. Moo writes,

The fact that Paul points to the nonpresence of an indisputably tribulational event, the revelation of the Antichrist, as evidence that the “Day” has not come, surely implies that believers *will* see it when it does occur. Furthermore, it cannot be argued in reply that Paul simply assumes the Thessalonians know that the Rapture will occur before that Day; the fact that the Thessalonians believed themselves to be in the Day shows either that they had forgotten or were never taught that the Rapture preceded it. In either case, it is difficult to see why Paul would not mention it.<sup>294</sup>

In response to Moo’s point three things must be said. First, listing events that will occur during the day of the Lord does not require that the Thessalonians would be around to see it.<sup>295</sup> The church was worried that they had entered into that day and Paul was simply providing evidence that they could not be since these events had not taken place. This method is comparable to a physician comforting a patient who is fearful they had contracted a deadly disease. The physician could point to the markers of the disease, note

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<sup>291</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 56.

<sup>292</sup> Charles Giblin, *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 122–39. Cf. Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 56, n. 54.

<sup>293</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 56, n. 54.

<sup>294</sup> Moo, “Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 189.

<sup>295</sup> Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 57, responds to this objection saying, “[T]he itemization of unseen tribulational events is a legitimate way to discount the rumor [that the day of the Lord had arrived] regardless of the rapture’s relationship to the tribulation.”

their absence in the patient, and thus determine the disease was not present. The patient may never experience the disease but he could be sure, without having ever seen the markers, that the disease was not present.<sup>296</sup>

Second, rather than proof that they were never taught that the Rapture preceded it, the fact that the church was in severe anguish because they thought themselves to be in the day points to the likelihood that they had been taught they were to participate in the *παρουσία* before this intense period of tribulation came upon the world. If they had been taught they would suffer through the day before the rapture, then they should have rejoiced in the knowledge that that for which they eagerly awaited was soon to occur. Finally, it stands to reason that if the church had been taught a pretribulation rapture but then had been persuaded by false teaching and severe persecution that they had entered the day of the Lord, then a restatement of a pretribulation rapture doctrine would have been little help in alleviating their fears.<sup>297</sup> It would have merely been a restatement of what they had already rejected based on persecution. It would have been pointless for Paul to restate it. They would therefore need more direct proof that they were not in the day.

#### Cosmic Upheavals (Joel 2:28–32, Acts 2:17–21, and Matthew 24:29–31)

Jesus declares in the Olivet Discourse, “But 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:29). Without question Jesus places these clear theophanic markers “immediately after the tribulation.”

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<sup>296</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 94–95, provides another similar conceptual example.

<sup>297</sup> Still, the view proposed here would agree that Paul did in fact provide additional teaching of the timing of the rapture to the day of the Lord. cf. Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 56, n. 57–58.

In Peter's sermon on Pentecost he quotes Joel and says, "The sun will be darkened and the moon into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come" (cf. Acts 2:17–21; Joel 2:28–32). These texts taken together appear to indicate that a cosmic upheaval, which Jesus locates after the Tribulation, will occur before the day of the Lord. Based on this analysis critics have often argued that the day of the Lord must occur after the Tribulation.<sup>298</sup>

These texts can be easily explained through a comparison of theophanic imagery in the NT. Niehaus has convincingly argued that all signs that Peter mentions occurred during the Incarnation, baptism, ministry, and crucifixion of the Lord.<sup>299</sup> Several times during Jesus' ministry signs occurred from God out of heaven. The Spirit descended out of heaven and the Father spoke from heaven at His baptism (Matt 3:16–17). Several times the Father spoke out of heaven in the hearing of those on earth (Matt 17:5; John 12:28). Most importantly, the crucifixion itself came with theophanic signs in conformity to those listed by Joel and Peter. Niehaus writes about theophany and the crucifixion:

We note here that it contains key elements of an Old Testament theophany. In particular the darkness (Matt 27:45) and earthquake (v. 51) echo the 'dark cloud' (Exod 19:16) above Sinai and the 'violent trembling' of that mountain (v. 8) as God descended upon it. We noted that God's advent at Sinai was a judgment upon sinful Israel even though he graciously brought the Law. So now God unleashes a theophanic "*Anfuhr der Natur*" as his Son lays down his life to pay the penalty of disobedience to that Law—although he himself knew no sin.<sup>300</sup>

To his analysis it could be added that even from His birth the star in the sky is in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Matt 2:2, 7, 9). If these events were fulfilled by the time

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<sup>298</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 203; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 94–96.

<sup>299</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 364; cf. pp. 357–364.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

of Peter's sermon on Pentecost, then there are no signs remaining to occur prior to the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

It may also be objected that Jesus specifically stated that these theophanic signs occurred after the Tribulation; therefore, the theophanic coming of God occurs after the Tribulation. Moreover, similar imagery is used in Rev 6:12 when the sixth seal is broken, which is also after many, if not all, events of the Tribulation (vv. 1–11).<sup>301</sup> Then in v. 17 more theophanic markers occur and the first appearance of “the great day of their wrath has come.” The parallel events of Rev 6:1–17 and Matt 24:3–31 seem to firmly place the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord after the Tribulation.<sup>302</sup>

While it is true that scripture identifies cosmic upheavals such as these as the coming of God,<sup>303</sup> their appearance does not occur only at the beginning of a theophany. Theophanic imagery often repeats throughout any given day of the Lord so that theophanic markers could occur at the beginning of the period, during the period and then again at the end.<sup>304</sup> The book of Revelation shows that these specific markers, the darkening of heavenly bodies, progressively intensify throughout the Tribulation.<sup>305</sup> In Rev 8:12 the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars were decreased by only a third. In 9:2 the sun was darkened because of smoke from the pit as evil spirits were released. In Rev 6:12 the darkening of the heavenly bodies appears to be complete. Moreover, the theophanic presence of God and the Lord has already been established from the book of Revelation as continuing throughout the Tribulation as evidenced by the multiple storm

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<sup>301</sup> Compare Rev 6:1–11 with Matt 24:3–28.

<sup>302</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 196.

<sup>303</sup> Hab 2:6.

<sup>304</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>305</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 5; cf. Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 71.

imagery throughout the book of Revelation.<sup>306</sup> The intensification of these markers also effectively rules out any recapitulation model, at least for the sake of the force of this objection.<sup>307</sup> If theophanic markers occur repeatedly, then Jesus' statement that they would occur after the Tribulation does not preclude their occurrence earlier.

One final note should be made. Critics who state this objection do not seem to recognize that other theophanic markers occur during the Tribulation including famine and earthquakes (Matt 24:7), birth pangs (v. 8), and the presence (*παρουσία*) of the Son of Man flashing like lightning (v. 27). These were all presented in chapter two as markers for the theophanic presence-coming of the LORD on the DL and occur prior to any statements about the end of the Tribulation.<sup>308</sup>

The Coming of Elijah Before the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5)  
Another potential objection is that Malachi 4:5 teaches that Elijah must come before the day of the Lord.<sup>309</sup> First, it must be noted that Jesus taught that this prophecy did not require that the literal Elijah had to return but the prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptist (Matt 11:10; 17:12). Luke wrote of John, "It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17; cf. v. 16).<sup>310</sup> Still, some hold that John is not the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. David M. Miller argues that because Luke 1:16, alluding to Mal 4:6, says "many" and not "all" as is implied by the Malachi that John did not completely fulfill the prophecy.<sup>311</sup> He states, the "restoration of

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<sup>306</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 4, 12.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>308</sup> See chapter two, part one, "Theophany" for a listing of theophanic markers.

<sup>309</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 203.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1:88, says that John is a prophet like Elijah.

<sup>311</sup> David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *NTS* 53.01 (2007), 14.

all things is rightly reserved for Jesus alone” (cf. Acts 1:6; 3:21).<sup>312</sup> He then argues that Luke-Acts associates both John the Baptist and Jesus with Elijah.<sup>313</sup> In either case, it is reasonable to argue that the NT teaches that Malachi 4:5 has been fulfilled.<sup>314</sup>

## Part 6–Conclusion

This chapter presented the case that the proposed model can be reasonably established based on the NT. Lexical data from ST and Hellenistic resources was examined to determine whether key NT Greek terms for the coming of the Lord support the proposed model. The most important terms included *παρουσία*, *ἀποκάλυψις*, and *ἐπιφάνεια*. Other Greek terms were examined as necessary.

First, the case was presented that the NT continues the OT “language of coming” to describe the Lord’s intervention in history. The NT uses verbal forms similar to the OT but principally utilized the noun *παρουσία* to portray the extended unified complex of events of the Lord’s immanent invisible intervention in history. This word explicitly described the abstract idea of “presence.” The word *παρουσία*, when referencing the Lord, appears in texts where the emphasis is not on the initial arrival but rather the effect that the extended and subsequent presence has. Both the religious and secular technical meanings of the word were appropriated and reshaped by NT writers to fit their teaching on the future coming of the Lord in glory.

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 2; Cf. n. 4. On p. 3, he goes on to say, “While the earthly Jesus *is* depicted as a prophet like the Elijah of 1–2 Kings, Luke also portrays him as the Messianic ‘Lord’ of Malachi 3, before whom John prepares the way as the Elijah of Mal 3.” Miller makes the case that Luke-Acts presents John as the fulfillment of the coming Elijah (Mal 4:5) and that Jesus is the fulfillment of “the One who is coming” of Mal 3:1.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 298.

Additionally, given the theophanic nature of the Lord's future coming NT writers were able to utilize the religious technical meaning of the word to portray the invisible theophanic presence-coming of the Lord during the Tribulation period. The Lord's coming, as the God-Man the Lord Jesus Christ, is likewise theophanic and conforms to the OT understanding of the presence-coming of the LORD. When the Lord comes He comes in the glory of His Father with His holy angels on His day to reveal His righteous judgment through His rendering to each according to his or her deeds. In that day He will be revealed as the righteous Redeemer, the righteous Judge.

The revelation of the Lord occurs at the coming of the Lord to bring about His word as revealed by the Spirit through the prophets. His word is established through the historical events that He brings to pass when He comes. Jesus Christ being the True Prophet, the One who arose like Moses, spoke in these last days concerning the kingdom of God (Heb 1:1–3). His word is being established by His work in the world through His body since the coming of the Lord, the Glory-Spirit upon the church at Pentecost. His word of the kingdom and wrath will be established in the future when He comes from heaven and is revealed on the day of the Lord (2 Thess 1:5–10).

The Greek words used to speak concerning the revelation of the Lord center around the premise of intellectual perception of divine truth being manifested through historical events. While the semantic range of most of these words overlap with visual sensory perception, the Greek connection of visual and intellectual perception ensures that NT revelation can mean intellectual perception.

Like the OT coming of the Lord, there is no single Greek word, such as *ἀποκαλύψις*, that encompasses the doctrine of revelation. All words used to speak of the

future revelation of the Lord are likewise used of both the revelation that occurred through the Incarnation as well as through the work of the Spirit in the church during the present age. Both past and present revelation occurred during an extended period of time of direct historical intervention due to the presence-coming of the Lord. In similar fashion, evidence indicates that the future revelation of the Lord will also occur over an extended period of time beginning with the *παρουσία*, continuing through the worldwide Tribulation, the posttribulational appearing and throughout the millennial kingdom.

The day of the Lord Jesus Christ is the period of time inaugurated by His *παρουσία* in which the Lord begins testing those who dwell on the earth. This testing is for the purpose of revealing the secrets of the heart through inciting moral decisions that are evident to all. The Lord then judges the individual based on those deeds, thus demonstrating or revealing His righteous judgment to the glory of the Father.

CHAPTER 4  
THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE BASED ON  
THE PROPOSED MODEL OF THE COMING OF THE LORD

In chapters two and three lexical and exegetical evidence from the Old Testament (OT), Second Temple Literature (ST), and the New Testament (NT) was presented to support the proposed model's view that the coming of the Lord is an extended unified complex of events. In these chapters, the coming of the Lord was argued to be one theme within a complex motif and interrelated with three other biblical themes: the revelation of the Lord; the sovereignty of the Lord; and, the day of the Lord (DL). These themes were developed together with some discussion on how they interrelate, but the full model has not yet been provided. The first section of this chapter will suggest a model that coherently integrates these four biblical themes together into a unified complex interpretive framework. It is believed that the biblical coming of the Lord theme is better understood within a context of other major doctrines that affect eschatology. Next, the key elements of the proposed model, for the purposes of responding to the two-comings objection, will be summarized. Finally, the proposed model will be evaluated for its ability to reasonably respond to each element of the two-comings objection. As noted in chapter one, due to space constraints it will not be possible to examine the historical element.

## Part 1–The Coming of the Lord: One Theme Within a Complex Motif

The last major problem common to all current pretribulation models noted in chapter one is the lack of a detailed integration of the coming of the Lord as a biblical theme. Each chapter has been laying the foundation for this integration with the lexical and exegetical studies of each of the four elements. This section will suggest how the proposed model of the coming of the Lord can be integrated into an interpretive framework with the other biblical themes examined thus far. Without properly integrating these themes it will be difficult to demonstrate the importance of many of the arguments used to answer the two-comings objection.

The coming of the Lord, as a biblical theme, is a comprehensive motif composed of the coming of the LORD (Yahweh), the coming of His representative, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Glory-Spirit. The OT and ST portray each with a notable emphasis on the coming of LORD (Yahweh).<sup>1</sup> The NT also portrays each, but with a notable emphasis on the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> In the book of Revelation, to be expected, as the record of the consummation of all things, the theme is not only the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ but also the coming of God the Father (the Ancient of Days) and the Glory-Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (NovTSup 13; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Osvaldo D. Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings: The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Literature 27; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 59.

<sup>3</sup> John begins the book in 1:4–5 with a Trinitarian formula to identify its source: “John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is coming (i.e., God the Father; cf. 1:8; 4:8; 16:5; 21:22–23), and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne (The “seven Spirits” is a common reference to the Holy Spirit; cf. Isa 11:2; Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 8:2), and from Jesus Christ, . . .” (1:4–5). The lack of a direct statement of “the coming of the Spirit” does not invalidate the assertion that a theme of the book is the coming the Glory-Spirit. As defined in this dissertation, the coming of God refers to His direct historical intervention, which emphasizes His immanence. One of the principal roles of the Spirit in the divine economy is to give revelation and when He gives revelation He is intervening in history (see chapter two, part one). The coming of the Spirit is also seen by the fact of His immanence with His people, which culminates in Rev 21:6. It is also not surprising that there is no direct

The biblical coming of the Lord theme is the story of scripture itself as God progressively comes throughout history in self-revelation to manifest Himself and to form an eternal relationship with His creatures (Rev 21:3–4). For the purposes of the present study the proposed model is primarily presenting a model for the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; however, His coming cannot properly be understood apart from understanding its relationship with the coming of the LORD and the Glory-Spirit.

### The Unifying Concept of Scripture

Numerous biblical theologians have attempted to provide a unifying concept of scripture, which would be the theme or hermeneutical pattern by which the various teachings of scripture could be integrated and interpreted.<sup>4</sup> Walter Kaiser presents biblical theology's quest to identify a "normative pattern," or "a center, a unifying conceptuality," that encapsulated a "total theology of the canon," which would provide a context for exegesis of individual texts.<sup>5</sup> After surveying past attempts to formulate this pattern he states that it "must be an *inductively* derived theme, key, or organizing pattern which the successive writers of the OT overtly recognized and consciously supplemented in the progressive unfolding of events and interpretation of the OT."<sup>6</sup> Many have attempted to provide this pattern but ultimately each failed to persuade the majority of scholars.<sup>7</sup> This failure is

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reference to the Spirit, since the Spirit, as the giver of truth, does not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears He will speak" (John 16:13). He is not to testify of Himself but of the Lord (John 15:26; 16:13–15).

<sup>4</sup> See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 1–40, for a helpful discussion of biblical theology's quest to discover this normative pattern.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 6–7, states, "Such a question was not the invention of modernity. It had long since occurred to the ancient writers themselves. This quest for a center, a unifying conceptuality, was at the very heart of the concern of the receivers of the divine Word and the original participants in the sequence of events in the OT."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32 (emphasis in original).

<sup>7</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 36, notes that the most popular "center to Old Testament theology"

likely the result of its complexity rather than simplicity. Commenting on this search, Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard note that “. . . while there is an organic unity to biblical revelation, there is also a proper diversity.”<sup>8</sup> Walther Eichrodt likewise acknowledges the hermeneutical complexity of scripture when he contrasts the “kaleidoscopic quality” of OT “terms and concepts” with its central focus on divine sovereignty, which he argues is “the single thread running through the whole.”<sup>9</sup> Geerhardus Vos speaks of “the truth” as “a multiformity of aspects.”<sup>10</sup> He rightly summarizes the point when he says, “The truth is inherently rich and complex, because God is so Himself.”<sup>11</sup>

Because of scripture’s complexity, instead of “one central motif under which . . . the whole message of the OT can be explained,” Longman and Dillard advocate a “multiperspectival” approach to interpretation.<sup>12</sup> This complex approach is not new. Even those scholars who advocate a single controlling theme also have had difficulty limiting it to that single theme without a note of complexity. For example, Kaiser argues that the center is found in what he calls the “tripartite formula of promise,” “I will be your God; you shall be My people, and I will dwell in the midst of you.”<sup>13</sup> George R. Beasley-

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among evangelicals include “God’s promise (Kaiser), his design (Martens), covenant (Robertson; McComiskey; Dumbrell), and theophany (Kline).”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Baker; 2 vols.; The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:15; see also *ibid.*, 1:512–20, for his discussion of this problem.

<sup>10</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; repr. Carlisle, Pa.; The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 36, note that this term was coined by Poythress. They further note that this approach “takes account of the many-faceted nature of God’s relationship with his creatures. . . . No one metaphor is capable of capturing the richness of God’s nature or the wonder of his relationship with his creatures.”

<sup>13</sup> Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 33–34 (cf. Gen 17:7–8; 28:21; Exod 6:7; 4:22; 19:5–6; 29:45–46; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12, 44, 45; Num 15:41; Deut 4:20; 29:12–13; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:27; Zech 8:8; 13:9; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3–7). He continues, “[N]either the vocabulary nor the formulae and technical terms by themselves would

Murray also advocates a threefold hermeneutic pattern: “1. *The universality of the rule of Yahweh*.<sup>14</sup> . . . 2. *The righteousness of the kingdom*.<sup>15</sup> . . . 3. *The peace of the kingdom*.”<sup>16</sup>

Two observations could be made. First, scholars recognize that scripture is an organic unity, meaning that all the various doctrines are expressed in a variety of ways while consistently and coherently returning to support that theme. Second, scholars recognize that this unifying theme is itself complex, meaning that it cannot be stated as simply one doctrine or theme. The unifying theme, therefore, requires a complex statement to define it.<sup>17</sup>

Recognizing the existence of a complex unifying concept, or complex interpretive pattern, the question becomes, what elements could reasonably be included in this complex pattern? Three principal themes will be suggested here to structure a theology of scripture: 1) the sovereignty of the Lord; 2) the revelation of the Lord; and, 3) the coming (or, presence-coming) of the Lord. Because they are interrelated and interdependent one

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make the case for a unified plan to the entirety of the OT progress of theology. The accent must ultimately fall where it fell for the writers themselves—on a network of interlocking moments in history made significant because of their content, free allusions to one another, and their organic unity. The focus of the record fell on the *content* and *recipients* of God’s numerous covenants. The content remained epigenetically constant, i.e., there was a growth—even a sporadic growth from some points of view—as time went on around a fixed core that contributed vitality and meaning to the whole emerging mass.”

<sup>14</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 20 (emphasis in original), writes, “The prophets stress Israel’s whole-hearted allegiance to the Lord (see, for example, Isa 26:1–15; 28:5ff.; 33:5ff., 17–22; and 44:5; Ezek 11:17ff. and 20:33ff.; Hos 2:16–17; and Zech 8:1–8), but the turning of the nations to God is integral to the hope of the kingdom. Sometimes this idea of turning is combined with pictures of the submission of the nations to Israel as well as to Yahweh (e.g., in Amos 9:11ff.; Mic 4:13 and 7:8–17; and Isa 49:22–26 and 60:4–16), but many passages depict the inclusion of the nations in the salvation of the kingdom (e.g., Isa 25:6–7, 45:21–22, 51:4–5, 52:10–11, and 56:3–4; Jer 3:17; Zeph 3:8–9; and Zech 8:20–21 and 14:9).”

<sup>15</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 20 (emphasis in original), continues, “This is represented in a variety of ways: sometimes in descriptions of the righteousness of the Messiah that overflows to the people (e.g., in Isa 11:3–5 and Jer 23:5–6), sometimes as a characteristic of the people generally (e.g., in Isa 26:2 and 28:5–6), but most often as the action of the LORD for the cleansing and renewal of the people (e.g., in Isa 1:25–26, 4:3–4, and 32:15–16; Jer 31:31–32; and Ezek 36:25–26 and 37:23–25—not forgetting Isa 52:13–53:12!).”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

<sup>17</sup> Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 33, writes, “The case for this inductively derived center” that “. . . embraced several epitomizing formulae which summarized that central action of God in a succinct phrase or two.”

element alone is not complete without the other two. Taken together, these three can be used as a complex unifying concept. While it may not be universally applicable in scripture, the unifying concept serves well to assist in explaining eschatological texts, particularly those relating to the present study.

Taking these three themes together, the complex unifying concept could be tentatively defined as follows: The sovereignty of the Lord is revealed by the presence-coming of the Lord. So far as has been examined by this writer, all other doctrines of scripture pertaining to eschatology support this complex unifying concept and can also be elucidated by it.<sup>18</sup> More importantly for the current thesis, this unifying concept will provide a context for understanding and clarifying the meaning of the proposed model of the coming of the Lord as an extended unified complex of events.

### ***The Sovereignty of the Lord***

The first element of the complex unifying concept is the doctrine of the sovereignty of the Lord. Numerous scholars have affirmed sovereignty to be the central theme of the OT.<sup>19</sup> A. L. Moore states, “The central concern of the Old Testament is the sovereignty of God.”<sup>20</sup> Even those who identify another principal theme acknowledge that the sovereignty of the Lord is a guiding doctrine of scripture.<sup>21</sup> This doctrine functions as the purpose or guiding principle of scripture, and history is structured by God to demonstrate

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, full demonstration of this statement will require another study.

<sup>19</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17–25; Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7–34; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:15; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 144–45.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7. Cf. Eichrodt, *Theology*, 1:512–20.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 363–402, who structures his biblical theology around the complex interaction and progression of the doctrines of revelation and salvation, spends the concluding section of his book on the actualization of the kingdom of God in history. On page 386, he defines the kingdom of God as “the actual exercise of the divine supremacy in the interest of divine glory.” He continues, “[T]he goal is that all these exercises of divine supremacy shall find their unitary organization in

His sovereignty. Stephen L. Cook writes, “The biblical traditions agree that God is at work in history, directing it toward a *telos* in accord with God’s will. Though often awkward and messy, history is subject to God’s guiding vision, not controlled by chance, fate, or the tyranny of humanity.”<sup>22</sup> The full revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord is the purpose, theme, and goal of the OT and eschatology.<sup>23</sup>

The sovereignty of the Lord is the principal content of the revelation that is given to humans, of which other doctrines support. It is the purpose and function of creation. God, by the fact of His creating, is Lord over heaven and earth.<sup>24</sup> Scripture proclaims that the LORD is the King of Israel and the whole earth.<sup>25</sup> By the fact of His calling and electing Israel, the LORD is King of Israel.<sup>26</sup> Scripture declares, “The LORD shall reign forever and ever” (Exod 15:18).<sup>27</sup> Scripture repeatedly expresses the sovereignty of the LORD, which is found in context with every other doctrine.<sup>28</sup> The Lord is demonstrated to be sovereign by His covenant administration, His justice, wrath, righteousness, victory over sin, mercy, and salvation.<sup>29</sup> The Lord is viewed as the King sitting in judgment

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one royal establishment. The three principle spheres in which the divine supremacy works toward this end are the sphere of power, the sphere of righteousness and the sphere of blessedness.”

<sup>22</sup> Stephen L. Cook, “Eschatology of the OT,” *NIDB* 2:305.

<sup>23</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 144–45, writes, “The whole picture of the future can therefore also be summed up in the expression, *the day of Yahweh*. Its original meaning is really the day of His manifestation or epiphany, the day of His festival, and particularly that festal day which was also the day of His enthronement, His royal day, *the festival of Yahweh*, the day when as king He came and ‘wrought salvation for His people.’”

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Nehemiah 9:6; Rev 4:11; Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *The Common Grace Covenants* (Biblical Theology 1; Wooster, Ohio: Weaver, 2014), 35–53; Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Exodus 15:18; 1 Sam 12:12; Pss 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 68:24; 74:12; 93:1; 95:3; 96:10; 97:1; 145:1; 149:2; Isa 24:23; 43:14–21; 44:6–8; Ezek 20:33; Mic 4:6–8.

<sup>26</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 8, writes, “The Old Testament recognizes that in every present moment Israel exists under God’s kingship.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Psalm 10:16.

<sup>28</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 18, writes, “Chiefly it was recognized that the kingship of Yahweh relates to his sovereign acts on behalf of his people through all times.” These acts include revelation, covenant, judgment, wrath, salvation, etc.; cf. pp. 17–25; Terence E. Fretheim, “God, OT View of,” *NIDB* 2:612.

<sup>29</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 339, says, “The coming of God for the saving sovereignty takes place in the *total* intervention of God through the Son of Man/Jesus, and the anticipated

during the Flood (Ps 29:10).<sup>30</sup> All historical events are intended to demonstrate the Lord's sovereignty, and no event occurs that is not part of His plan.<sup>31</sup>

Even the coming of the Messiah, at least in OT prophecy, is subsumed under the doctrine of the sovereignty of the Lord.<sup>32</sup> Though there is clearly a line of prophecy of the coming of Messiah in the kingdom,<sup>33</sup> it is the Lord, not the Messiah, who is the central figure in the eschatological drama (Psalm 2).<sup>34</sup> Often, the Messiah is seen as the Lord's vice-regent to help Him rule the people;<sup>35</sup> however, the Lord alone is seen to be exalted on that day (Isa 2:11).<sup>36</sup> In most texts (OT and ST), the Messiah appears only after the Lord has come in judgment wrath to purify the people for Messiah's advent and kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The Revelation of the Lord***

The second element of the complex unifying concept is the revelation of the Lord. Revelation is not primarily disclosure of divine knowledge, but removal of divine concealment.<sup>38</sup> Vos notes, "All spiritual life is by its very nature a hidden life . . . . Such a

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events of the Day of the Lord are concentrated in the acts of God in the death-resurrection-parousia of that same Son of Man."

<sup>30</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 40:13, 14; Dan 2:20–21, 38. Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:612, writes, "God's actions are an activation of the divine will, not idle or accidental. Every divine act is an act of will and always stands in service of God's purposes in the world. . . . Every divine action is informed by God's ultimate salvific will for the world, by God's faithfulness to promises, and by God's steadfast love for all."

<sup>32</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 339.

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 49:10; Isa 9:6, 7; Zech 9:9, 10; Jer 22:4; 30:21; Mic 5:2–5.

<sup>34</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 11, states that there is a reinterpretation in the cultic Psalms, "[F]rom the proclamation 'JHWH has become king' comes the hope 'JHWH will become king' (Isa 24:23; 33:21–22; Zeph 3:15f., Zech 14:16, etc.). This expectation lays weight on the End as a time of the peculiar activity of God (cf. Isa 18:7; Jer 3:17; Joel 3:15–17, etc.)."

<sup>35</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 65–8.

<sup>36</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 65–8.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 3:564.

life we can know only through revelation.”<sup>39</sup> Because God is Spirit, He can be known by humans only if He chooses to reveal Himself. The act of revelation originates, therefore, in the sovereign will of God.<sup>40</sup> Oepke writes,

Revelation is not the impartation of supernatural knowledge or the excitement of numinous feelings. Knowledge can certainly come through revelation, and the revelation of God will be accompanied by numinous feelings. . . . But revelation is not to be identified with these. In the proper sense, it is the action of Yahweh. It is the removal of His essential concealment, His self-offering for fellowship.<sup>41</sup>

Revelation not only originates in the sovereignty of the Lord, but it is foundationally an unveiling of that sovereignty. Any revelation that occurs, by its very nature, demonstrates His sovereignty. This fact can be seen by the process of revelation. Scholars identify two types or modes of revelation, which Vos has fittingly labeled “act-revelation” and “word-revelation.”<sup>42</sup>

In act-revelation, revelation occurs through the Lord’s actions in history.<sup>43</sup> When the Lord acts, He does so in history so that people can witness.<sup>44</sup> Eichrodt comments,

[T]he establishment of a covenant through the work of Moses especially emphasizes one basic element in the whole Israelite experience of God, namely *the factual nature of the divine revelation*. God’s disclosure of himself is not grasped speculatively, not expounded in the form of a lesson; it is as he breaks in on the life of his people in his dealings with them and moulds them according to his will that he grants them knowledge of his being. This interpretation of the covenant is indicated by the whole historical process leading up to it. The foundation of an enduring covenant order appears as the purpose and consummation of the mighty deliverance from Egypt; the power, the ready assistance, the faithfulness of Yahweh experienced thus far are offered to the people for

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<sup>39</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4; Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:603–5; Albrecht Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” *TDNT* 3:573.

<sup>41</sup> Oepke, *TDNT* 3:573.

<sup>42</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5–8. Other scholars also recognize this distinction and to varying degrees locate divine revelation as occurring in one or the other, or in a combination of both. For a thorough overview of the various approaches to the doctrine of revelation, see Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double Day, 1983).

<sup>43</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 6–7.

<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 44:6–8, 28; cf. Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:604.

their permanent enjoyment, while at the same time their behavior is subjected to definite standards.<sup>45</sup>

He further notes that the “. . . demonstration of the will of Yahweh appears as a concrete fact of history, as a covenant expressed on the practical relationship of living founded on these events.”<sup>46</sup> Vena states that “. . . the glory of Yahweh would be revealed in the historical event of the return (Isa 40:5) and God himself would come and dwell in Jerusalem (Zech 2:10; 8:3; Ezek 43:7–9).”<sup>47</sup> Historical events provide a concrete demonstration of those attributes of the Lord that He sovereignly chooses to reveal.<sup>48</sup>

Act-revelation is also progressive in history.<sup>49</sup> Vos, while noting the “*historic progressiveness of the revelation-process*,” states that it “has not completed itself in one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts.”<sup>50</sup> Because act-revelation is not one act of the Lord but many individual and distinctive acts, there is inherently in it something distinguishable from general revelation, i.e., the Lord’s continuous revelation in creation. Since salvation is a process within history, *Heilsgeschichte*, so also revelation is a process within history.<sup>51</sup> Beasley-Murray states, “Thus, the goal of history is reached in the revelation and universal acknowledgement of

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<sup>45</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:37–38 (emphasis in original).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Note the sovereign decision in the LORD’s statement in Exod 33:19.

<sup>49</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 36, note that the OT “. . . is a message from the God of Israel about the God of Israel. However, it is not about Yahweh in the abstract. There is very little, if any, abstract theologizing in the Old Testament. No, the Old Testament is a revelation about Yahweh in relationship with humankind, specifically with his chosen people. Furthermore, this relationship is not so much described as it is narrated. There is a historical dimension to biblical revelation. Thus a proper biblical theology must take into account both the subject matter of the Bible, which is the divine-human relationship, and the fact that the Bible’s message is told through time.”

<sup>50</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5 (emphasis in original).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 6–9.

Yahweh's sovereignty, the triumph of righteousness, and the establishment of peace and salvation in the world."<sup>52</sup>

It is not that the sovereignty of the Lord is incomplete, since the Lord is universally sovereign now;<sup>53</sup> instead, it is that the Lord's sovereignty is not universally perceived or acknowledged.<sup>54</sup> J. E. Fison writes, "The future kingdom of God is a future not of a reality, which is at present unknown, but of a manifestation, which is at present veiled. The reality is present here and now, though partly hidden."<sup>55</sup> The Lord is King now, but that sovereignty is veiled.<sup>56</sup> The goal and purpose of history is to reveal progressively that sovereignty by the Lord acting in history.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the progress of the Lord's actions in history causes the sovereignty of the Lord to be progressively revealed. All acts of the Lord, whether in judgment, in wrath, or in salvation reveal His sovereignty.<sup>58</sup>

Word-revelation occurs through communication of the prophetic word. It can come either before the act-revelation, to predict its future coming, or after it, to provide a theological explanation of the meaning of God's action in history.<sup>59</sup> Vos writes, "[S]uch act-revelations are never entirely left to speak for themselves; they are preceded and followed by word-revelation. The usual order is: first word, then the act, then again the

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<sup>52</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 20–21. Cf. Isa 33:22, "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us."

<sup>53</sup> Daniel 4:2–3, 17; Ps 9:16; 83:18; cf. Dan 2:21; 5:21.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 11.

<sup>55</sup> J. E. Fison, *The Christian Hope: The Presence and the Parousia* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), 58.

<sup>56</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 11, writes, that there is a reinterpretation in the cultic Psalms: "[F]rom the proclamation 'JHWH has become king' comes the hope 'JHWH will become king' (Isa 24:23; 33:21–22; Zeph 3:15f., Zech 14:16, etc.). This expectation lays weight on the End as a time of the peculiar activity of *God* (cf. Isa 18:7; Jer 3:17; Joel 3:15–17, etc.)."

<sup>57</sup> It is evident that the LORD is guiding history toward this universal perception and acknowledgement His sovereignty (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:9–11). Cf. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:15.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:611–18.

<sup>59</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 6–8.

interpretive word.”<sup>60</sup> The cycle between act-revelation and word-revelation progressively increases the knowledge accumulated of God and His character.<sup>61</sup>

### *The Coming of the Lord*

The third element of the complex unifying concept is the coming of the Lord, which has been presented in chapter two part one, referring to His active intervention in history.<sup>62</sup> Stated another way, the coming of the Lord refers to His immanent presence, either visible or invisible, in a particular time and location to reveal His sovereignty.<sup>63</sup> This element is the least recognized and least integrated in theology.<sup>64</sup> As seen in chapter one, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is often viewed as synonymous with His revelation.<sup>65</sup> In a similar manner, biblical scholars tend to not distinguish between the revelation of the Lord and the coming of the Lord. It has already been seen that revelation comes through the acts of God.<sup>66</sup> While it is possible to use the two ideas synonymously, depending on what is being discussed, there is a clear conceptual distinction. The coming of the Lord is the act of the Lord by which the revelation of His sovereignty occurs.<sup>67</sup> The coming of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 3–10; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 59–74; E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *IDB* 2:127; Bill T. Arnold, “גֹּאֲלֵנוּ,” *NIDOTTE* 1:616.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17–25.

<sup>64</sup> Cook, *NIDB* 2:299, provides a section for “The Day of Yahweh; The Latter Days,” but fails to discuss the coming of Yahweh. See also chapter one, “The Incompleteness of the Models.”

<sup>65</sup> For example the following scholars view the revelation of the Lord as referring to the posttribulational return: Gerald B. Stanton, “The Doctrine of Imminency: Is It Biblical?” in *When The Trumpet Sounds*, 223; Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 69, 71; Leon Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 28; Walvoord, “New Testament Words for the Lord’s Coming,” 286; Charles F. Hogg, and William E. Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (Edinburgh: Oliphants, Ltd., 1919; repr., Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 70; George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956; repr., 1983), 70; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 165.

<sup>66</sup> Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5–8; Oepke, *TDNT* 3:573.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 14–15, writes, “The exilic and postexilic prophets reverted to the saving aspect of the day of the Lord. The focus was again on deliverance and restoration: on that day the Lord would

the Lord is the cause while revelation is the effect. It is the action whereby revelation occurs; therefore, it is natural that the two are used synonymously if there is no immediate need to make such a distinction. Coming and revelation are as closely connected as words and the voice that carries them. For example, the coming and revelation of the Lord can be used synonymously just as “speaking” can simultaneously refer to both “words” and “voice” even though a clear distinction between the two is possible.

If this model is correct and the universal recognition of the sovereignty of the Lord is the beginning point and goal of all of God’s actions, then the principal content of revelation is the sovereignty of the Lord. If revelation occurs in and through the events of history, and the coming of the Lord refers to His action in history, then the sovereignty of the Lord is therefore the guiding principle by which the coming and revelation of the Lord operate (Phil 2:9–11; 1 Cor 15:23–28). This understanding seems to be in agreement with the observations of other scholars. Beasley-Murray states, “In the Old Testament, the ultimate purpose of the future coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord is the establishment of the kingdom of God.”<sup>68</sup> The expression “kingdom of God,” as both Beasley-Murray and Moore note, does not occur in the OT.<sup>69</sup> Instead, the emphasis is on the sovereignty of the Lord or His “ruling activity.”<sup>70</sup> Beasley-Murray continues, “It

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come and reveal his glorious lordship and power; he would save Israel and annihilate its foes. . . . Central to these depictions of the day of the Lord is the assertion that God comes to establish his power and rule.” Cf. pp., 12–16; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 10–11.

<sup>68</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.; Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7, notes that the phrase “‘the Kingdom of God’ (מַלְכוּת יְהוָה)” “means primarily ‘sovereignty’ as a characteristic of JHWH and only secondarily a territory and a people wherein this sovereignty is displayed and acknowledged. It is, therefore, better to speak of ‘the sovereignty’ than of ‘the kingdom’ of God. This concept of God’s sovereignty is related in the Old Testament to Israel’s past, present and future.”

<sup>70</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17.

was Yahweh's sovereign action on which the attention of Old Testament writers focused, and it was the manifestations of his sovereign power that called for their worship."<sup>71</sup>

If it can be accepted that the coming of the Lord is the act that causes the revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord, then it is natural that the coming of the Lord is the fundamental unifying and energizing principle in the events of eschatology, the climax of history. In other words, the coming of the Lord is the causative element in the revelation of the Lord's sovereignty through the progression of history. If the goal of history is the unmitigated universal revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord, then the coming of the Lord is the principal focus of scriptural teaching about His action in history. Beasley-Murray writes, "The foundation of OT eschatology is the coming of Yahweh."<sup>72</sup> Vena writes, "The central idea in the eschatology of the Old Testament appears to be the coming of Yahweh, which is expressed with the metaphor the 'day of the Lord.'"<sup>73</sup> His coming is tied to the judgment and wrath of Israel and the nations, the hope for salvation, overcoming sin, the coming of the Messiah, and the creation of a new heaven and new earth.<sup>74</sup>

The principal elements of the coming of the Lord are as follows. First, the coming of the Lord is due to His sovereign decision because no one forces the Lord to come, act, or reveal Himself.<sup>75</sup> The sovereign Lord comes for the purpose that He decrees and remains present for as long as He wishes.<sup>76</sup> The Lord comes when and where He decides in accordance with His sovereign will.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., cf. 18–25.

<sup>73</sup> Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 12; cf. Jenni, *IDB* 2:127.

<sup>74</sup> See Oepke, *TDNT* 5:861–62.

<sup>75</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 20; Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 22.

<sup>76</sup> Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 20–21.

Second, when the Lord comes it is understood that He is coming *from heaven*.<sup>77</sup>

The sovereignty implied in His coming is due to the status afforded by ancient writers to “heaven.”<sup>78</sup> Rather than heaven being a location, from which God literally descends, it is therefore better seen as a status of sovereignty.<sup>79</sup> “To ascend into heaven” denotes the reign of God like the ascent of a king to a throne.<sup>80</sup> Because heaven is over all, the Lord’s ascent to heaven indicates His universal dominion.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, Wehmeier observes, “[H]uman impudence that seeks to climb ‘to heaven’ becomes particularly obvious (as an expression of hubris).”<sup>82</sup>

The concept of the coming of the Lord from heaven is not literal since He is omnipresent,<sup>83</sup> but it plays a part in defining the Lord as over all, and sovereign. His “coming” does not require that the Lord actually leave heaven.<sup>84</sup> Regarding the Lord’s descent from heaven, Wehmeier notes that

... the discussion of God’s descent is not actually, then, an anthropomorphism but a stylistic means for expressing God’s superiority over the world. Gen 11:5, 7 demonstrate precisely this aspect of terminology. Yahweh’s need to “descend” in order to “see” the works of the people that have reached “up to heaven” (v 5; cf. 18:21) resounds with a “grand irony.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> G. Wehmeier, “עלה, to go up,” *TLOT* 2:891, notes that in these contexts, “*yrd* has the technical meaning ‘to descend from heaven’ so that God’s dwelling as the point of departure need not be mentioned.” Cf. Genesis 11:5; Exod 3:8, 19:11, 18, 20; John 3:13, 27, 31, et al.; 6:32–33, 38; Acts 1:9–11; 2 Pet 1:16–18.

<sup>78</sup> See Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 251, about the throne of God and the throne of judgment pronouncement (Exodus 24; Isaiah 6); cf. Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

<sup>79</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

<sup>80</sup> Psalm 103:19, “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.”

<sup>81</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891. Cf. Pss. 47:3, 10; 97:9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; Cf. Isa 14:13f.; Jer 15:53; Amos 9:2; Ps 107:26.

<sup>83</sup> Psalm 139:7; See also discussion in Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:611–12.

<sup>84</sup> Nehemiah 9:13, “Then You came down on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven; You gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.” Cf. Exod 20:22, “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.’” Deut 4:36, “Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.”

<sup>85</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

Notice that the Lord came upon Mount Sinai (Exod 20:20), was dwelling in the thick cloud (v. 21), and yet spoke from heaven (v. 22).<sup>86</sup>

Since the Lord is omnipresent, His physical movement or change in location refers to His immanent acts in history.<sup>87</sup> Acts associated with the Lord's coming, whether He comes to establish a covenant, to reveal knowledge, to judge, or to save, all reveal that the Lord is sovereign. Fretheim states,

God's actions are an activation of the divine will, not idle or accidental. Every divine act is an act of will and always stands in service of God's purposes in the world. . . . The divine word does not make God present, but seeks to clarify and direct God's will within an already pervasive presence. Every divine action is informed by God's ultimate salvific will for the world, by God's faithfulness to promises, and by God's steadfast love for all.<sup>88</sup>

Wehmeier writes, "Yahweh's descent serves primarily as an exhibition of his might: he comes to liberate and to aid (Exod 3:8; Isa 31:4; 63:19; Ps 144:5–8) or to punish (Gen 11:7; Mic 1:3; cf. Mic 1:12)."<sup>89</sup> Thus, His interventions into history, i.e. His coming and descent from heaven, demonstrate that He is reigning from heaven.

Together, the sovereignty, coming, and revelation of the Lord constitute a complex unifying concept of Scripture. While no one has stated this interpretive concept in precisely this way, it is present in a number of writers. Moore writes,

But it was in the Covenant in particular that Israel saw the sovereignty of God displayed; in the establishment of Israel as His people God's Lordship was expressed and given form and location.<sup>90</sup> It is to this election of Israel in sovereign love that the prophets look back, seeing in it the

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<sup>86</sup> See also Nehemiah 9:13. Nehemiah notes that when the LORD "came down on Mount Sinai," He then "spoke with them from heaven." Even though the LORD had descended upon Sinai, He still could speak "from heaven."

<sup>87</sup> Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:611; Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 149.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:612.

<sup>89</sup> Wehmeier, *TLOT* 2:891.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:36–69.

basis of God's concern with Israel's history and of the obligations of service imposed on Israel.<sup>91</sup>

The Lord revealed His sovereignty by coming and establishing His covenant with Israel as well as subsequent actions in history associated with His people.<sup>92</sup> Eichrodt also writes,

Nevertheless it is precisely this kaleidoscopic quality which renders all the more impressive the single thread running through the whole—the determination to subordinate the whole world and everything in it to the one God of Sinai; and this dominating theme, by injecting the old modes of speech, developed on polytheistic assumptions, with new content, changes them into instruments suitable for proclaiming the universal sovereignty of Yahweh. All this applies with especial force to Old Testament statements about the forms of God's self-manifestation.<sup>93</sup>

The recognition of the sovereignty of the Lord is the purpose and theme of revelation and that revelation occurs as the Lord acts in history, which scripture describes as the coming of the Lord.

All acts of the Lord –covenants, judgments, wrath and His work in redemption—are part of the design of history to manifest the central idea that the Lord is sovereign.<sup>94</sup> Beasley-Murray states that “. . . it is God who comes, or there is no redemption, no revelation, and not establishment of the divine will.”<sup>95</sup> All of Scripture, including prophetic texts, may be read with this idea in full view. Mowinckel writes, “The kingly rule of Yahweh is the central idea round which are grouped all other ideas and conceptions, and by which they are explained. The details in Jewish eschatology often seem to lack organic coherence, but once this central idea is recognized, the whole

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<sup>91</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7–8.

<sup>92</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 36; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 18–19.

<sup>93</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:15.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 17–24.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

picture becomes clear.”<sup>96</sup> The goal of complete manifestation of the Lord’s sovereignty is clearly seen throughout the OT.<sup>97</sup> Isaiah 2 states that “the LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (v. 17) and Zechariah 14:9 proclaims, “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”

### The Time When the Lord Comes to Reveal His Sovereignty

One more element is needed to complete the complex unifying concept, which is the historical element. The acts of the Lord in history to manifest His sovereignty do not occur simply as part of His providential and continuous upholding of creation. The act of the coming of the Lord indicates a special event distinguishable from His continuous activity of sustaining creation. Just as His acts of special revelation are distinct from general revelation in all of creation so also are the acts by His special coming. His coming is set apart in time, which scripture calls the day of the Lord (DL).

### ***The Day of the Lord***

The time periods in which the Lord comes to reveal His sovereignty are especially noted in Scripture. Moore writes that “. . . in the establishment of Israel as His people God’s Lordship was expressed and given form and location.” He further says, “[I]t is significant that the Deuteronomist uses the phrase ‘at that time’ (בעת ההוא) sixteen times, indicating that the establishment of the Covenant was ‘the classic time’ of God’s activity.”<sup>98</sup> Moore later writes, “[A]lways the day of JHWH is a day of special *divine*

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<sup>96</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 144–45.

<sup>97</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 7–8; See Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 146–47 for extensive list of scripture citations.

<sup>98</sup> Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 8, n. 1.

activity.”<sup>99</sup> Beasley-Murray states, “[T]he Day of the Lord is none other than the coming of Yahweh to set right the injustices of the earth. And it is equally plain that the hope of the kingdom of God is understood in the Old Testament as the coming of Yahweh to establish his sovereignty of salvation.”<sup>100</sup> Walther Eichrodt writes, “[T]he religious core of the whole salvation-hope . . . is to be found in the coming of Yahweh to set up his dominion over the world.”<sup>101</sup>

### Summary of Key Points of the Proposed Model

In chapters two and three, the relation of these four biblical themes was examined as pertaining to eschatology and a number of individual points were presented. The most significant distinction between other models (of any view) and the proposed model is its definitive emphasis on the coming of the Lord as the effective principle of all events. All events, i.e. salvation, covenant, testing, judgment, wrath, revelation, etc., occur as the direct result of the coming of the Lord when, and only when, He sovereignly wills to act in history. Based on the foregoing analysis and the exegetical foundation laid in chapters two and three, the most significant elements of the proposed model for the purpose of responding to the two comings objection will be summarized here.

First, all events, including the coming, revelation, and appearing of the Lord, occur by the sovereign will of God the Father. The sovereignty of the Lord is a present reality, though His sovereignty is veiled. These actions and events are designed to bring about the universal and undeniable recognition of the sovereignty of the Lord.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. (emphasis in original).

<sup>100</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 24, continues, “The coming of Yahweh was a primary datum in Israel’s faith. . . . There could never have been a stage in Israel’s history when the kingdom of god was looked for apart from the coming of Yahweh.”

<sup>101</sup> Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:499.

Second, the coming (or presence-coming) of the Lord refers to the arrival of the immanent veiled Glory-Presence, or Spirit, of the Lord to a specific sphere of presence or influence. When the Lord comes, scripture views Him as present within this sphere by His active intervention in history throughout the period of time in which He is said to be present. His veiled Glory-Presence is indicated by theophanic markers, which could be either literary or actual. During the Lord's coming, He may intervene in history to give revelation, create or manage a covenant, judge, save, and, to come on the eschatological day of the Lord. The *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ is treated by NT writers as an OT theophanic presence-coming. It begins as an OT theophany, is an extended event of the Lord's presence-coming in direct historical intervention upon the world, and results in the revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord.

Third, the revelation of the Lord is the result of the presence-coming of the Lord. Revelation is itself a process beginning with the coming of the word of the Lord proclaiming the imminent coming of both salvation and judgment. Next, in some future time, the Lord comes and acts in history in accord with His word. As humans perceive the correspondence of historical events to the word of the Lord, knowledge of the Lord is communicated. Revelation is verified by the recognition formula, which is the phrase, "you [or they] will know that I am the LORD," and indicates that humans will know that the one who brought about the historical event is the LORD.<sup>102</sup> The events of Matthew 24–25, 1 Thessalonians 4–5, 2 Thessalonians 1–2, and Revelation 6–19 are part of the word-

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<sup>102</sup> Gilchrist, *TWOT* 366, states, "In addition to knowledge of secular matters *yāda'* is also used of one's relation to the divine, whether acquaintance with other gods (Deut 13:3, 7, 14) or with Jehovah (1 Sam 2:12; 3:7). The heathen do not know God (Jer 10:25) and neither does Israel, according to the prophets (Jer 4:22). The plagues of Egypt were sent so that the Egyptians might know that Jehovah is God (Exod 10:2, etc.). He will destroy (Ezek 6:7) and restore Israel so that they may know that he is God (Isa 60:16). The prophet Ezekiel, in particular, uses the phrase "that you may know" in his threats (Ezek 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 27, etc.)."

revelation that will be fulfilled by the act-revelation at the coming of the Lord. This act-revelation will occur at some future period of time, known as the day of the Lord, when the Lord comes to intervene in history to bring those events to pass. The book of Revelation repeatedly declares the righteousness of the Lord by His taking His power and reigning (Rev 11:17; 19:6), judging (11:18; 14:7; 16:5–7; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11), and committing righteous acts (15:4). Revelation 6:15–17 especially seems to indicate that humans on the earth during the day of the Lord will recognize that the events of the preceding seals (vv. 1–14) were brought about by Him who sits on the throne and by the Lamb “for the great day of their wrath has come.”

Fourth, those who dwell within the sphere of His Glory-Presence undergo active purging and sanctification. The Lord causes this purging and sanctification to occur through testing by His word, by tribulations, false prophets, false revelation, false christs, and divine discipline, up to and including wrath. Fifth, the sovereignty of the Lord is revealed to those within the sphere of His Glory-Presence by His active intervention who recognize that the events which are occurring are in accord with His prophetic word. Finally, the time of the Lord’s presence-coming is often identified as the day of the Lord because the Lord is revealed to be sovereign during this time.

**Part 2–Evaluation of the Thesis: Does an Extended, Unified Complex of Events View of the Coming of the Lord Provide a Reasonable Solution to the “Two-Comings” Objection to Pretribulationism?**

Now that the proposed model as a canonical theme has been explained, reasonably supported, and key points summarized, it can be applied to the two-comings objection. This part will examine whether the proposed model can provide a reasonable response to each element of the two-comings objection to pretribulationism that were identified in

chapter one with the exception of the historical element. It was noted that space constraints prevent a sufficient response to the historical element of the two-comings objection. The remaining elements include: the 1) lexical; 2) exegetical; 3) hermeneutical; 4) theological; and, 5) practical. A few citations from critics will be given for reference; however, for detailed citations of critics' arguments chapter one should be referenced. Also, there will be a number of points of the following response that have been examined at length in the development of the proposed model provided in chapters two and three. For these points it will not be necessary to repeat the full discussion; therefore, only a brief summation will be needed here.

#### Response to the Lexical Objection

Critics object that the meaning and usage of the NT words *παρουσία*, *ἀποκάλυψις*, *ἐπιφάνεια*, and “the day” provide no support for two comings, but argue for a single posttribulational event.<sup>103</sup> Moo notes, “What is important to note about these terms [*παρουσία*, *ἀποκάλυψις*, and *ἐπιφάνεια*] is, first, that each is clearly used to describe the posttribulational return of Christ and, second, that all three also designate the believer’s hope and expectation.”<sup>104</sup> Critics also argue that Paul’s use of *ἀπάντησις* (*apantēsis*, “to meet”) in 1 Thess 4:17 with *παρουσία* should be taken as a technical term in reference to the Imperial Parousia. The technical use is argued to require an immediate return to the place of origin after meeting the official, in this case Christ, which rules out the

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Douglas J. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (ed. Stanley N. Gundry; 2d ed.; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 194–96; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 165–67; J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 44–8; Robert Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 158–62.

<sup>104</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 194–95.

possibility of a significant period of time to elapse between the rapture and the posttribulation appearing.<sup>105</sup>

***Response 1: The Supposed Double Reference of Key Greek Terms***

It was noted in chapter one that pretribulationists have insufficiently integrated lexical scholarship of NT words for the coming of the Lord into any of the current pretribulation models. Chapters two and three began, therefore, by providing a lexical and exegetical study of key Hebrew and Greek words as the foundation for integrating them into the proposed model. While it is a common hermeneutical premise that context and usage are primary in determining the meaning of the word rather than vice versa, a lexical examination is nevertheless foundational to exegesis. A word's exact meaning is guided by usage, but the word is not typically used to express an idea for which there is no conceptual link. In other words, writers must abide by the rules of language if their message is to be correctly communicated to their intended audience.

An exegetical examination was performed to determine how each Hebrew and Greek term is best integrated into the proposed model. An examination of how each Hebrew and Greek word was used by scripture writers was also included in the lexical examinations to identify the semantic range of key words when used by those writers as well as the canonical corpus itself. Because the previous two chapters examined these terms in detail and presented the case that each could be reasonably and coherently incorporated into the proposed model, it will not be necessary to provide an in-depth discussion of each term; however, a summary can be provided.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 200–01; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 168; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 91–2.

The presentation of the coming of the LORD in chapter two argued that when the OT speaks of the coming of the LORD it is referring to the LORD's direct intervention in history in a particular time and location. The OT uses a range of active verbs that together form a group called "the language of presence-coming" to refer to the immanent presence of the LORD as He directly acts in creation. Included in this range are words depicting His acting in history to give revelation, create or manage a covenant, judge, save, and to intervene on the eschatological DL.<sup>106</sup> Corresponding with the language of coming, scripture portrays the immanent presence of the LORD through theophanic imagery.

In chapter three, *παρουσία* was argued to refer to the extended presence-coming of the Lord with a similar meaning as the coming of the immanent presence of the LORD in the OT. Like the latter, the *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ was argued to refer to His theophanic, i.e. veiled, Glory-Presence descending upon the entire earth to commence global testing, judgment, and the execution of divine wrath. In this model, the *παρουσία* is a single event, extended over the entirety of the Tribulation period. The word was argued to always be in reference to this extended theophanic presence-coming and with a posttribulational reference only in 2 Thess 2:8 where it is qualified by the word *ἐπιφάνεια*.<sup>107</sup>

Paul's use of *ἀπάντησις* ("to meet") and *παρουσία* in 1 Thess 4:17 was examined regarding whether the likelihood of Paul's using the Imperial Parousia as an archetype of His teaching in this text. It was found that scholars have raised significant doubt as to

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Fretheim, *NIDB* 2:611–18.

<sup>107</sup> It was argued that this qualification identified a unique event within the extended *παρουσία*, which is to be equated with Matt 24:29–31 and Rev 19:11–21, when the Lord's previously invisible presence is manifested to the entire world.

Paul's use of the technical Imperial Parousia in this text.<sup>108</sup> Instead, strong evidence favored Paul's dependence on the theophany of God on Sinai in Exodus 19. While Paul's dependence on the Imperial Parousia cannot be completely ruled out, most scholars agree that Paul freely adjusted the cultural concepts to fit his teaching.<sup>109</sup>

Even if Paul did base his teaching on the Imperial Parousia, both the scripted events common to Imperial Parousias as well as evidence in the 1 Thess 4:17 text suggest that an *immediate* return to earth after the meeting in the clouds is not required. Paul provides no additional insight on the events after the meeting in the clouds, and evidence indicates that during the *ἀπάντησις* of Imperial Parousias a period of time would pass for certain events to occur before the entourage returned to the city.<sup>110</sup> Based on this data, it is reasonable that Paul's use of *ἀπάντησις* in 1 Thess 4:17 does not require an immediate return to earth.

Evidence was also presented suggesting that NT revelation is not dependent upon any one word such as *ἀποκάλυψις*. For divine revelation, the NT uses *ἀποκάλυψις* (and *ἀποκαλύπτω*) synonymously with *φανερῶ* (*phanerōō*, “manifested”<sup>111</sup>) to refer to revelation given during one of the following periods of history: 1) the earthly ministry of Jesus; 2) His current ministry through the Spirit; or, 3) His future intervention in history during His *παρουσία*. All cases where these terms were used to reference revelation

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<sup>108</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 6–10, provides the most detailed history and well-developed rejection of the view. He builds upon the arguments first made by Jacques Dupont, *ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ: L'union avec le Christ suivant saint Paul* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 9; Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings*, 43; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:866.

<sup>110</sup> See discussion in chapter three part one.

<sup>111</sup> “φανερῶ,” BAGD, 852; “φαίνω, φανερός, φανερώς, φανερῶ, φανέρωσις, φανός, φαντάζω, φάντασμα, ἀναφαίνω, ἀφανής, ἄφαντος, ἐμφανίζω, ἐμφανής, ἐπιφαίνω, ἐπιφάνεια, ἐπιφανής,” *NIDNTTE* 4:585–91. For example, compare the uses of these two words in the following parallel texts: Rom 1:16–17 with 3:21, Rom 16:25 with v. 26, Eph 3:5 with Col 1:26.

during this last period were argued to fit into one of the following categories: 1) the extended complex of events beginning before and including the Tribulation. 2) His manifestation to believers at the rapture. Like OT revelation, chapter three suggested that NT revelation, in the narrow sense,<sup>112</sup> refers to that which occurs when the Lord comes and acts in history. It is a historical process by which the Lord reveals Himself through historical events.<sup>113</sup>

The day of the Lord was argued to reasonably refer to the extended complex of events contemporaneous with the *παρουσία*.<sup>114</sup> More specifically, the eschatological DL refers to the final Tribulation, also known as Daniel's seventieth week. The principal point is that both the DL and *παρουσία* could be reasonably viewed as the period from the beginning of the Tribulation throughout the period rather than simply the posttribulational appearing.

The final word, *ἐπιφάνεια*, was shown to not always refer to the future appearing of the Lord, much less be confined to His posttribulational appearing. It can be used to refer to His Incarnation, His appearing to only believers at the rapture, or to the world after the Tribulation. For this reason, there can be multiple appearings with no detriment to a single coming view of the Lord.

The proposed model, therefore, does not split the *παρουσία* into two distinct comings. While it might be considered two phases of one *παρουσία* as proponents of Model 2, there is no logical distinction in "comings" between the rapture and the

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<sup>112</sup> For the distinction between the narrow and broad senses of divine revelation see chapter two part two.

<sup>113</sup> Hultberg, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Prewrath Response," in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 268; Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in Robert L. Thomas, Ralph Earle, and D. Edmond Hiebert, *1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (EBC 11; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 86.

<sup>114</sup> For a thorough canonical presentation of this points see Craig Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 27–68.

posttribulational appearing as if the Lord returned to heaven for seven years and then descended again. Instead, because the Lord's immanent presence is the active force bringing about tribulational events, He is therefore present on earth veiled in theophany. One of the inaugural events of the extended παρουσία is the rapture appearing (ἐπιφάνεια), or the gathering and His παρουσία (2 Thess 2:1), and the climactic event is the posttribulational appearing (ἐπιφάνεια) of His παρουσία (2 Thess 2:8; Matt 24:30). Both the pretribulation rapture and the posttribulational appearing are two events of the one presence-coming of the Lord, which the NT calls His παρουσία.

***Response 2: Key Terms Do Not Appear Unqualified in Any Posttribulational Text***

Critics argue that παρουσία, ἀποκάλυψις, and ἐπιφάνεια reference the posttribulational appearing (Matt 24:29–31; Rev 1:7).<sup>115</sup> Moo writes,

What is important to note about these terms is, first, that each is clearly used to describe the posttribulational return of Christ and, second, that all three also designate the believer's hope and expectation. Parousia is indisputably posttribulational in Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39 and in 2 Thessalonians 2:8; *apokálypsis* has the same time frame in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, as does *epipháneia* in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. On the other hand, the parousia of Christ is explicitly stated to be an object of the believer's expectation in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13; James 5:7–8; and 1 John 2:28. The word *apokálypsis* is used to describe the believer's hope in 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13, while all four references to *epipháneia* in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1; 4:8; Titus 2:13) bear this significance. If, then, believers are exhorted to look forward to this coming of Christ, and this coming is presented as posttribulational, it is natural to conclude that believers will be present through the tribulation.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 215, 227, 232; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 165–67; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 44–8; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 158–62; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 61–70.

<sup>116</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 194–95.

Critics also claim that the posttribulational return is specifically referenced where *παρουσία* is used.<sup>117</sup>

First, neither *παρουσία* nor *ἀποκάλυψις* appear in any undebated posttribulational text (Matt 24:29–31; Rev 19:11–19) as a direct reference to the physical coming of the Lord from heaven, unless qualified by another term.<sup>118</sup> Amillennialist Sam Storms notes, “[N]owhere in this passage [Matt 24:29–31] does Jesus use the term *parousia* (as he does in vv. 27, 37). The Greek word translated “coming” is *erchomenon*, which could mean either ‘coming’ or ‘going.’ Be it noted, however, that even if *parousia* were used, it need not point to the second coming. One cannot simply assume that the later, technical Pauline, use of that term is in view here.”<sup>119</sup> If these terms do not appear in any posttribulational appearing text then pretribulationists are free to argue that they refer to the entire complex of events beginning with the pretribulation rapture without splitting them into two *parousias*, two revelations, and two appearances of the Lord.

In contrast to the critics’ view, the proposed model integrates the NT’s use of *παρουσία* and *ἀποκάλυψις* into a model that does not necessitate a double reference for either while also providing a reasonable explanation for the multiple uses of the word *ἐπιφάνεια*. All texts that use *παρουσία* in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ either provide no details to definitively discern its timing in relation to the Tribulation,<sup>120</sup> have been presented by the proposed model to be a reference to the extended complex of events

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 215; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 61–70.

<sup>118</sup> In 2 Thess 2:8, the only possible exception in the NT, Paul is careful to qualify *παρουσία* with the word *ἐπιφάνεια*, “appearing.” This qualification was argued in chapter three part one to identify an event, specifically the posttribulational appearing, within the extended complex called the *παρουσία*. This view will be further examined below. Cf. Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 54–58; Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 100–101.

<sup>119</sup> Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 266.

<sup>120</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13; James 5:7–8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 John 2:28.

beginning before the Tribulation,<sup>121</sup> or are qualified by another term to indicate an event within the extended complex.<sup>122</sup> Likewise, it has been suggested that ἀποκάλυψις can reasonably refer to the extended complex in 2 Thess 1:7. Also ἐπιφάνεια, when believers are referenced, can refer to a pretribulation rapture since there is precedence that only believers will see the glorified Lord when He comes.

To parallel the format of Moo's argument in the quote above, the response could be stated thusly: If believers are exhorted to look forward to this coming of Christ, and this coming is presented as an extended unified complex of events, which includes the Tribulation, it is natural to conclude that believers would fix their hope on the beginning of the extended period designated by these terms. They will therefore be raptured when the Lord comes to bring the tribulation upon all those who dwell on the earth.

### ***Conclusion***

Because no word referring to the extended complex of events is used to unambiguously reference the posttribulational appearing, it cannot be maintained that the proposed model requires two comings. Regarding ἐπιφάνεια, the NT treats the word as non-technical to refer to any divine appearing for the sake of His people. In a pretribulation rapture model, there can be an ἐπιφάνεια at the beginning of the Tribulation for believers and another ἐπιφάνεια at the end for those who come to faith during that time. This examination suggests that the proposed model provides a reasonable response to the two-comings objection.

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<sup>121</sup> Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Thess 4:15; 5:23.

<sup>122</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8.

## Response to the Exegetical Objection

Critics argue that an exegetical examination of NT texts regarding the rapture and the posttribulational appearing provides no indication of two comings of the Lord.<sup>123</sup>

Response to this objection will parallel critics' arguments as presented in the introduction. The response will include an examination of: 1) the major rapture texts; 2) the Olivet Discourse and major rapture texts; 3) 2 Thessalonians 2; and, 4) the book of Revelation.

### ***Response 1: The Major Rapture Texts***

The texts cited by critics are John 14:3, 1 Cor 15:51–52, and 1 Thess 4:13–18. The proposed model would agree with the critics' objection that there is no indication of a two-fold coming in these texts; however, a reasonable case has been made that these texts, particularly the last two, portray the inauguration of an extended theophanic presence-coming of the Lord.

First, the proposed model argued in chapter three that 1 Thess 4:13–18 can reasonably be understood to portray the inauguration of the eschatological theophanic presence-coming of the Lord and God the Father. Several scholars understand Paul to be presenting the *παρουσία* as a Sinaitic theophany as evidenced by parallel imagery including: 1) the descent from heaven; 2) trumpet blast; 3) the ascent of the people to meet God; 4) voices; and, 5) clouds.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, Paul's teaching that believers will go into the clouds to be with the Lord is a significant conceptual distinction from the Lord's coming with the clouds in Matt 24:30. In the former, the glory of the Lord is pictured as

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 196–233; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 10.

<sup>124</sup> Exod 19:9–24; cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 9; John F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture: The Church's Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1950), 108–16.

being veiled by those clouds, and there is no indication that anyone but believers will see Him. Believers enter into the clouds to be with Him, which further indicates that the clouds do not open to reveal His glory to the world.<sup>125</sup> By contrast, in the latter, the universally visible glory is the emphasis, and no one is seen entering into those clouds.

Other elements were particularly noted in this text. First Thessalonians 4:16 says that the trumpet is “the trumpet of God.” The source of the trumpet is therefore God Himself.<sup>126</sup> Rather than being just any trumpet, such as the seven trumpets sounded by seven angels in Revelation,<sup>127</sup> this trumpet is specifically identified with God Himself. The cry of command in this text also seems to portray the presence-coming of the Lord in a manner reminiscent of God’s theophanic coming in judgment on the DL depicted in the OT.<sup>128</sup> Like those OT theophanic comings of the Lord that inaugurated a period of the Lord’s direct intervention in judgment upon Israel, the Lord comes with a cry of command.<sup>129</sup>

The proposed model also views 1 Cor 15:51–52 as teaching the inauguration of the eschatological theophanic presence-coming of the Lord on the eschatological DL. Again, the rapture is linked to the trumpet, which is marker that indicates the inauguration of a theophany. The fact that the trumpet in this text is identified as the “last” is significant. Moreover, this trumpet is held by most scholars to be same trumpet as “the trumpet of God” in 1 Thess 4:16.<sup>130</sup> The first trumpet of God was sounded at the

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<sup>125</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in Robert L. Thomas, Ralph Earle, and D. Edmond Hiebert, *1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (EBC 11; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 53.

<sup>126</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 87.

<sup>127</sup> Rev 8:6, 7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15.

<sup>128</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 87.

<sup>129</sup> E.g., Isaiah 42:13; Jer 25:30; and, Zeph 1:16.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 63; David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary: A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament* (Clarksville, Md.: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), 489–90; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 74.

inauguration of the theophany on Sinai, and if 1 Thess 4:15–17 is also a Sinaitic theophany, then it is reasonable that this trumpet is inaugurating the last, or eschatological, Sinaitic theophany. This trumpet is inaugurating the final theophanic coming on the eschatological DL that will result in the universal revelation of the sovereignty of the Lord.<sup>131</sup> In both 1 Thess 4:15–17 and 1 Cor 15:51–52, the rapture is said to occur when this theophany begins.

***Response 2: The Olivet Discourse and the Major Rapture Texts***

Next, critics argue that these rapture texts occur simultaneously with the posttribulational appearing in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:3–25:46; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–38; cf. Luke 17:22–37). This identification is based on supposed parallels including: 1) “the word of the Lord,” which is taken to be the oral tradition of the Olivet Discourse; 2) the coming of the Lord; 3) the accompanying presence of angel(s); 4) the trumpet; 5) a resurrection; and, 6) the gathering of the elect.<sup>132</sup> Further, the resurrection of OT saints occurs after the Tribulation (Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:1–3, 13), connected with a trumpet and an angel, and is noted to be strikingly similar to Paul’s description of the Resurrection-Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4.<sup>133</sup>

Regarding the critics’ claim that the parallel elements locate the rapture with the posttribulational appearing, the proposed model is able to provide an alternative identification for each.<sup>134</sup> Still, there are more dissimilarities than similarities between 1

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 108–16.

<sup>132</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104, 135.

<sup>133</sup> Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 193–94.

<sup>134</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104, 135.

Thessalonians 4 and the Olivet Discourse.<sup>135</sup> First, critics admit that Paul’s reference to the word of the Lord in 1 Thess 4:14 cannot be definitively linked to any oral tradition going back to Jesus or to the Olivet Discourse.<sup>136</sup> This section of text in 1 Thess 4:13–18 is begun by Paul noting that the Thessalonians were grieving (v. 13). The question is why were they grieving at all? They should have known that the coming of the Lord would involve the resurrection. First Thessalonians 1:10 indicates that Paul already had preached to them about the return of Jesus as judge, which implies a resurrection.<sup>137</sup> Why would they grieve at all or think that their loved ones would not participate in the *parousia*?<sup>138</sup> Such a grieving is a significant argument in favor of this event being separate from the general resurrection of all OT and Tribulation saints at the beginning of the kingdom.<sup>139</sup> Paul does not cite OT scripture, but rather “the word of the Lord,” which is guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ. OT references are clear that the general resurrection occurs after the Tribulation and at the beginning of the kingdom (Dan 12:1–2; cf. Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:12–14). The confusion also seems strange if this event is the same as the one described in Matthew 24:30–31.

By contrast, “the word of the Lord” was presented in chapter two to be an integral element in the historical process of the revelation of the Lord. Thomas argues that Paul’s

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<sup>135</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Robert L. Thomas, Ralph Earle, and D. Edmond Hiebert; ed. F. E. Gaebelin; The Expositor’s Bible Commentary 11; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 51; cf. Hogg and Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 137.

<sup>136</sup> Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1972; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 191–93; contra Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 102–3.

<sup>137</sup> Joseph Plevnik, “The Taking Up of the Faithful and the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18,” *CBQ* 46 (1984) 275.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 275–76; Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 182.

<sup>139</sup> Osvaldo Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings: The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Literature 27; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 163, n. 13, notes that there is some evidence that Judaism had a belief that the resurrection would occur after the messianic kingdom (cf. *4 Esdras* 5:41; *2 Bar.* 30:2; 50:1–4). He also notes that some may have thought the dead would miss the *parousia*.

teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4 is more dissimilar to the canonical sayings of Christ than similar.<sup>140</sup> The “word of the Lord” was shown throughout the OT to refer to a specific and detailed prophecy predicting the future coming and intervention of the LORD in history for salvation and judgment.<sup>141</sup> For example, Jeremiah uses the phrase in Chapter 17 to refer to a verbal revelation to the people concerning blessing and wrath. Those who would listen to and obey the word of the LORD (v. 20) would be healed (v. 14) and blessed (vv. 24–26). To those who would not listen to and obey the word of the LORD the LORD would bring destruction (v. 27). When the Babylonians were laying siege to Jerusalem, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah declaring the way of escape and the way of death (Jer 38:21). According to the word of the LORD, if Zedekiah went out of the city and gave himself over to the Babylonians, then he would live, and the city would be spared from destruction (vv. 17, 18, 20). Voluntarily handing himself over was equated with “obeying the LORD” (v. 20). If Zedekiah remained in the city, and therefore disobeyed the word of the Lord, then he would die, and the city would be destroyed (v. 18). This prophecy was thus a word of the Lord for salvation and judgment since both were declared to occur depending upon Zedekiah’s obedience to that word.

The word of the Lord is a frequent OT phrase regarding the future historical intervention of the Lord for salvation and judgment. Because Paul uses it in reference to the rapture and, as chapter three argues, to the theophanic presence-coming of the Lord to intervene in history, it is reasonable that Paul is using “the word of the Lord” in the same manner as it is used in the OT. If correct, then the rapture is “the word of salvation” for those “in Christ” and for anyone who would come to faith in Christ by the gospel. Since

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<sup>140</sup> See Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 50–51.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Jer 39:16–18.

the Olivet Discourse does not teach any similar event of rescue (i.e. resurrection-rapture), which is the specific content of this “word of the Lord” (i.e. for salvation), it is unlikely that Paul’s source for the “word of the Lord” in 1 Thess 4:15 is the Discourse or any oral tradition associated with that text.

Further, given that the OT frequently portrays the word of the Lord for salvation and judgment in close connection to the prophet to whom it came,<sup>142</sup> if it is used similarly here, then Paul would be the human instrument through whom this word of salvation came to the people. To maintain the parallelism, “the word of the Lord” would be a direct revelation from the Spirit to Paul, the prophet, and therefore correspond to other teachings that he received by a revelation from the Lord.<sup>143</sup> Based on this examination it seems reasonable that the word of the Lord does not refer to the posttribulational appearing in Matt 24:29–31.

The second parallel noted is the coming of the Lord. The *παρουσία* in 1 Thess 4:15 is argued by critics to refer to the appearing in Matt 24:29–31.<sup>144</sup> First, it should be noted that the word *παρουσία* does not appear in Matt 24:29–31 even though it does occur in this chapter four times.<sup>145</sup> It seems reasonable to assume, though not required, that if either Paul or Matthew (depending upon whose work was composed first) had intended to link these two descriptions that their terminology would match. If it is argued that they might not have had access to the existing text to see what term was used then a question arises: How did Matthew’s definition of *παρουσία* differ from Paul’s such that Paul could

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<sup>142</sup> E.g., Isa 2:1; Jer 1:1–2; Ezek 1:3; Zeph 1:1; Hag 1:1, 3; etc.

<sup>143</sup> Romans 16:25–26; 2 Cor 12:1, 7; Gal 1:12; 2:2; Eph 3:3; cf. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 51; Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 191–93.

<sup>144</sup> Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 194, 212–23; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104–5, 135–36.

<sup>145</sup> Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 266.

use it for his depiction of the posttribulational appearing but Matthew, who still used the term in four other verses in the same discourse, felt it necessary to use a completely different verb? Admittedly, it is plausible that both writers affirmed the same definition and usage and merely chose to use different portrayals. If posttribulationism is correct, then each of these various expressions would be synonymous. Still, if it is plausible that Matthew used *παρουσία* to refer to something different than the event in 24:29–31,<sup>146</sup> then a parallel between 1 Thess 4:15 and those specific texts where Matthew uses *παρουσία* should at least be explored.

In contrast to the critics' view, the proposed model has presented evidence that *παρουσία* is distinct from the posttribulational appearing. Rather than being synonymous with *παρουσία*, the posttribulational appearing is merely one event, albeit climactic, of the larger sequence of events that NT writers identify as the *παρουσία*.<sup>147</sup> The proposed model holds that *παρουσία* refers to the entire sequence of events of Matthew 24:4–31.<sup>148</sup> This meaning of *παρουσία* has been argued to be in accord with the biblical coming of the Lord theme, which understands His coming to be an extended unified theophanic presence-coming of the Lord on the DL.<sup>149</sup> The entire sequence is a theophany as indicated by the presence of theophanic markers including earthquakes (Matt 24:7; Rev

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<sup>146</sup> Charles Cooper, "The Parousia of Jesus Christ,"<sup>4</sup> [http://www.solagroup.org/articles/endtimes/et\\_0001.html](http://www.solagroup.org/articles/endtimes/et_0001.html), notes that because Matthew wrote after the apostles, and frequently corrected and clarified OT texts, he would have explained the term "parousia" if it were different than the apostles' use; yet, he does not. Cooper writes, "One should conclude that Matthew means the exact same thing as Paul, Peter, James and John by his use of the term *parousia*. Matthew specifically uses this term to tie together the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Matthew emphasizes the beginning of Christ's parousia in all four occurrences."

<sup>147</sup> Craig A. Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," in *Three Views on the Rapture* (2010), 35–52.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 38–54, 64–88.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Blaising, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Pretribulation Response," 42–52; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64–88.

6:12),<sup>150</sup> birth pangs (Matt 24:8; 1 Thess 5:3),<sup>151</sup> divine wrath (Matt 24:7; Rev 6:1–8),<sup>152</sup> fear (Matt 24:6; Luke 21:26),<sup>153</sup> and lightning (Matt 24:27; Luke 17:24; Rev 4:5), which are indicative of the Lord’s veiled presence.<sup>154</sup> As expected by the proposed model, Matthew selectively uses *παρουσία* such that it appears in only four places (3, 27, 37, and 39), none of which is the posttribulational appearing text (vv. 29–31).

Because the coming of the Lord is typically viewed as the physical descent of the Lord from heaven,<sup>155</sup> non-pretribulationists understandably link the four appearances of *παρουσία* to the posttribulational appearing in vv. 29–31. Other than this logical deduction, there is nothing in the text that requires that *παρουσία* be a reference to vv. 29–31. Instead, in each of the four instances *παρουσία* can reasonably refer to the extended

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<sup>150</sup> Earthquake alone: Isa 6:3–4; 29:6–7; 64:1–3 [H 63:19b–64:2]; Jer 4:24; Amos 9:1, 5; Joel 3:16; Hag 2:6–7.

<sup>151</sup> Birth pangs (הֵבֶל *hēbel*) is a metaphor for the fear element of theophany. Seven out of eight uses of this word appears in prophetic literature (Isa 13:8; 26:17; 66:7; Jer 13:21; 22:23; 49:24; Hos 13:13). Victor P. Hamilton, “הֵבֶל (*hbl* IV), pi. be pregnant, come into travail; הֵבֶל (*hēbel*), pain, pang” *NIDOTTE*, 2:12, notes, “In these prophetic passages the use of a mother writing in pain because of a forthcoming childbirth is always a figure of speech for judgment that is about to break out on the people, be they outsiders (Isa 13:8—Babylon; Jer 49:24—Damascus) or God’s own people.” Cf. pp., 14, and 127. The imagery is also present in Isa 21:3; Jer 4:31; Mic 4:9–10; 5:3.

<sup>152</sup> The OT identifies sword (war), famine, wild beasts, and plague as divine wrath. Cf. Ezek 14:21.

<sup>153</sup> E.g. Exod 3:6; Deut 5:5; 1 Kgs 19:13. Cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 26; Samuel L. Terrien, “Fear,” *IDB* 2:257ff.; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:269; Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 43, writes, “In the theophany, the God of Israel draws near as one whose ways are supremely holy and utterly mysterious. Man is overawed by the self-manifestation of the *mysterium tremendum*. The mystery of God’s holiness is as unfathomable as it is terrifying. As man directly witnesses God’s self-disclosure in the theophany, he cannot penetrate the mysterious aura of divine holiness, much less stand up to its frightening demeanor. Terrified by the august events unfolding immediately before him, Biblical man hides his face (so Moses in Exod 3:6 and Elijah in 1 Kings 19:13), falls faceward toward the ground (so Abraham in Gen 17:3 and Ezekiel in Ezek 1:28), or utters a word of awful exposure (so Isaiah of Jerusalem in Isa 6:5, “Woe is me! For I am undone”) or dismay (so Jacob in Gen 28:17, “How awesome is this place!”). Yet the terror he experiences is not alone negative in quality. It may be at the same time a realization that the deity is now about to intervene in the concreteness of history for the salvation of his people.”

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 195.

<sup>155</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 168; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 135.

period of time from vv. 3–31.<sup>156</sup> Its use in v. 27 in referencing the Son of Man as lightning was shown in chapter three not only to be a theophany but a specific and repeated image in the OT depicting the veiled theophanic coming of the Lord in judgment.<sup>157</sup>

This last point provides another piece of evidence against equating the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man in v. 27 with the posttribulational appearing in vv. 29–31. In v. 27, the *παρουσία* of the Son of Man, like the *παρουσία* of the Lord in 1 Thess 4:14–17, indicates that His glory is veiled by clouds. While Jesus does affirm that the *παρουσία* will be universally visible, the picture is the flashing of lightning *within* clouds. The lightning is partially revealed and partially concealed, being mixed together with the clouds.<sup>158</sup> The image depicted is, at least conceptually, a close parallel to the OT Sinaitic theophanies presented in chapter two. Moreover, OT storm-cloud theophanies were regularly depicted in the OT when the Lord came and was present; however, the image specifically called attention to the fact that despite the Lord having had come to reveal Himself the full manifestation of His glory was concealed within the storm-cloud.<sup>159</sup>

By contrast, the image conveyed in vv. 29–31 is that of full disclosure of the glory of the Son of Man. By the time of this disclosure, the veil was fully removed, and no longer is His glory being shrouded. The conceptual distinction between v. 27 and vv. 29–

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Blaising, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” 35–52.

<sup>157</sup> See Exod 9:24; Dan 10:6; Hab 3:4, 11; Deut 33:2, 39–41; Job 36:26–33; 37:1ff; Ps 18:14; Ezek 21:10, 15, 28; Hos 6:5; Amos 5:9. Cf. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 71–3.

<sup>158</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 344–50, and 378–79.

<sup>159</sup> Deuteronomy 4:12, 15; cf. 10–12.

31 regarding the disclosure of the glory of the Son of Man is such that it does not seem feasible that they could refer to the same event.<sup>160</sup>

Further, if it is agreed that v. 27 speaks to the publicity of the event, which seemingly equates to the publicity of v. 30, then a problem arises. Verse 30 is usually taken to be the bodily appearing of the Lord that fulfills Acts 1:11. The statement in v. 27 that speaks of the publicity of the *παρουσία* is that it is like lightning flashing from one end of the sky to the other, which verges on the notion of omnipresence and seems to be mutually exclusive of a bodily appearing. Warren writes,

How manifestly is the point of comparison not its instantaneousness but its *publicity*. The Parousia should not occur far away in the desert solitudes, it should not be in the secret chambers, but should fill the whole heaven with its glory. . . . The advent of the messiah will not be of such a nature that you will require to be directed to look here or to look there, in order to see him, but it will be as the lightning, which, as soon as it appears, suddenly announces its presence *everywhere*. What is meant is that when it takes place, it will all of a sudden openly display itself in a glorious fashion *over the whole world*.<sup>161</sup>

Revelation 1:7, a parallel to Mat 24:30, says “every eye will see *Him*” (emphasis added).

The question must then be raised, how can the bodily coming of the Lord, which occupies a limited space, be simultaneously and universally witnessed around a spherical earth? The proposed model’s understanding that Matt 24:27 refers to the Lord’s veiled theophanic presence-coming, the effects of which are witnessed universally, seems to better resolve this issue without the need to equate the *παρουσία* with v. 30.

The third parallel noted is the shout. In the Olivet Discourse there is no mention of a shout; however, the comparison is drawn from the publicity of the rapture. Paul

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<sup>160</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 68–72.

<sup>161</sup> Israel P. Warren, *The Parousia: A Critical Study of the Scripture Doctrines of Christ’s Second Coming; His Reign as King; The Resurrection of the Dead; and the General Judgment* (2d ed.; Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg, & Donham, 1884; reprt. 1902), 21 (emphasis in original).

seems to indicate that the rapture will be a loud and public event rather than a secret one, which corresponds to the posttribulational appearing. Gundry is correct in rejecting this argument since “the matter of secrecy has very little to do with the validity or invalidity of pretribulationism.”<sup>162</sup>

Rather than teaching that the rapture is a secret event, the proposed model would affirm that the inauguration of the *παρουσία* and the DL presented by Paul, of which the rapture is here presented as a component, is a very loud and public event. First, at least one scholar has noted that the shout in 1 Thess 4:16 could refer to the shout of command at the beginning of the DL when the Lord prepares His army for battle, which was discussed in detail in chapter two part one.<sup>163</sup>

Second, because the Lord can instantly destroy His enemies with the breath of His mouth (Rev 19:15, 21) there is little need for His army if the battle is short in duration. The shout to prepare His army for battle seems, therefore, to imply a long battle in which His army of angels are the chief agents of His war during His day. This understanding of the role of angels accords with both the OT and NT teaching. The OT often portrays the LORD at the battlefield commanding His angels to 1) direct the course of human events; 2) implement His judgment by marking the righteous for rescue or the wicked for wrath; and, 3) carry out that judgment.<sup>164</sup> The NT specifically places the Lord in command of the heavenly angels.<sup>165</sup> In continuity with the OT, angels perform the same functions.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 104.

<sup>163</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 44-50.

<sup>164</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 50, writes, “The angelic accompaniment of Yahweh is a stereotyped feature in the theophanies of the OT. Yahweh comes as the leader of the heavenly troops.” Cf. Deut 33:2-3; Ezekiel 9-10.

<sup>165</sup> Matthew 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:27; Luke 9:26; 12:8-9; John 1:51; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 5:21; Heb 1:6-9; 2:8; 1 Pet 3:22.

<sup>166</sup> Parallel to the OT teaching, in the NT the Lord uses angels to 1) direct Tribulational events (Rev 6:1-8); 2) implement His judgment by marking the righteous for rescue or the wicked for wrath (Matt

Finally, Paul is likely making a reference to the inauguration of a Sinaitic theophany, which is indicative of OT day of the Lord imagery. While the rapture, as a translation<sup>167</sup> is a mystery in the OT, all the imagery that Paul uses in this text nevertheless finds its origin in the OT coming of the LORD theme as presented in chapter two.

In contrast to Paul's depiction of the rapture, there is no mention of a shout in any posttribulational text (Matt 24:29–31; Mark 13:24–27; Luke 21:27; 2 Thess 2:8; or, Rev 19:11–19). The absence of the shout in these texts is expected by the proposed model since the tribulation is over, wrath is complete, and the Son of Man has appeared during the battle of Armageddon to save His elect from the armies of the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:11–21; Zech 14:1–5). Instead of war, the image in Matt 24:29–31 is the establishment of peace and the kingdom.<sup>168</sup> In Matt 24:29–31 the time for war and destruction is passed, with Rev 19:11–21 and 2 Thess 2:8 being the last battle. The events of gathering and the trumpet have reference to gathering believers into the kingdom.<sup>169</sup>

The fourth parallel noted is the angelic accompaniment. Contrary to any assumptions of significance due to angels being referenced in both texts, angelic accompaniment is a regular element in biblical theophanies.<sup>170</sup> Apart from this point, it could be noted that Paul identifies only one angel, which does not even participate in the

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13:39–41, 49; Rev 7:1–8); and, 3) carry out that judgment (Matt 13:42–43, 50). Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 50–57.

<sup>167</sup> As Plevnik, "The Taking Up of the Faithful," 274, writes, "[T]ranslation," (also "taking up," or "rapture"), "indicate[s] that a person is taken up to another place or sphere of existence." Technically speaking, at the time of the rapture of the saints (1 Thess 4:15–17), believers who have died are first resurrected, i.e. brought back to physical life (v. 16). Then they will be translated "together," i.e. *at the same time*, with believers who had not yet died from the earthly sphere of existence to the heavenly sphere of existence (v. 17), which is "in the clouds." Still, this sequence occurs quickly; "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor 15:52).

<sup>168</sup> Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 69–70.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 30:4; Isa 27:13; Jer 31:8–26; Zech 9:14; 4 Ezra 13:39–40; *Pss. Sol.* 11:1–9.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. 2 Thess 1:7; Rev 4:6–8 and continuously throughout the book.

gathering of believers. As Plevnik notes, the agents of gathering in Paul are God and the Lord.<sup>171</sup> By contrast, Matthew references a plurality of angels who are the direct agents of the gathering of the elect.

The fifth parallel noted is the trumpet. Chapter two noted that trumpets and trumpet blasts occur in three distinct ways in scripture: 1) as a signal for gathering; 2) as a signal as a warning for war/battle; and, 3) as a declaration of the presence-coming of the Lord in theophany.<sup>172</sup> The section above discussing the three major rapture texts presented the case that the trumpet used in reference to the rapture in 1 Thess 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:52 is specifically the trumpet of God, which is the third type of use. The trumpet used in Matt 24:31 seems most likely to be a gathering trumpet rather than a theophanic trumpet for at least three reasons. First, there is no indication that it is associated with God as the trumpet in 1 Thess 4:16.

Second, theophanic trumpets, when found in connection to a theophany, always precede that theophany, or, at the very least, occur contemporaneously with its beginning. In Matt 24:29–31, the theophany occurs in vss. 29–31, and the trumpet occurs subsequently in v. 31. While some may argue that these events are contemporaneous, that view seems unlikely because all theophanic elements take place and all eyes see the glory of the Son of Man, and only then does the trumpet sound. By contrast, during the Sinai theophany, the trumpet began in the morning and continued to be heard throughout the inaugural events of the theophany (cf. Exod 19:16, 19–19). Unlike the other uses of the trumpet, the theophanic trumpets appear to serve no purpose other than to be a defining characteristic of the presence of God in stormy theophanic glory. Finally, the trumpet

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<sup>171</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 8.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Robert H. O'Connell, “שׁוֹפָר (šôpār), ram's horn,” *NIODTTE* 4:68–9.

used in Matthew is specifically said to be used to send forth His angels in order to gather the elect.

The supplemental argument is similarly answered, which states that Paul's depiction of a trumpet and an angel in relation to the rapture is similar to the trumpet and angels found in OT texts depicting the posttribulation resurrection of the saints.<sup>173</sup> In these texts, the trumpet is a gathering trumpet not a theophanic trumpet. Moreover, the text cited by Paul in 1 Cor 15:54 (Isa 25:8) cannot definitively tie the rapture to the posttribulation resurrection because the text is cited in several locations in the NT in reference to events in the last days that are separated by immense periods of time. Immediately after Isaiah's statement that God will swallow up death for all time (25:8), which Paul quotes in connection with the rapture (1 Cor 15:54), is the statement, "And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces," which is cited in Rev 7:17, a tribulation text, and in Rev 21:4, a postmillennial text. Rather than linking the rapture to the posttribulation resurrection, Isaiah's text has various applications throughout the period beginning with the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits (1 Cor 15:23).

Based on this examination, it seems reasonable that the trumpet in Paul's texts and the one in Matthew are two distinct trumpets. The actual distinction raises a significant question/observation. Matthew 24:29–30 is widely agreed to be a theophany, and trumpets herald and accompany theophanies. If the analysis above indicated that the trumpet pictured is not a theophanic trumpet, then it must be asked why. If the proposed model is correct, then the absence of the theophanic trumpet in Matthew 24:29–30 and its presence in the two rapture texts fits with the proposed sequence of events. The

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<sup>173</sup> Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," (1984), 193–94.

theophanic trumpet, as always, heralds the inauguration of the coming of the Lord on the DL, which is noted in 1 Thess 4:15–17 and 1 Cor 15:51–52. This inauguration, and the associated theophanic trumpet, would occur at the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week, i.e., the Tribulation. The theophany in Matthew 24:29–30 is posttribulational, and a theophanic trumpet would not be expected.

The final parallel is the gathering of the elect. It was already noted above these texts conflict on who gathers the elect. Pretribulationists have pointed out the discrepancy here.<sup>174</sup> It is noteworthy to point out that John 14:1–3, one of the three major rapture texts, agrees with 1 Thess 4:15–17 that the Lord is the one who gathers believers from the earth.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, the destination in both John 14:1–3 and 1 Thess 4:15–17 is taken by many commentators as heaven not earth.<sup>176</sup> In the John text, the immediate destination is explicitly stated in vv. 2–3 is “the Father’s house,” i.e. heaven.

Paul portrays both a translation and an assumption into heaven while Matthew’s account indicates neither.<sup>177</sup> Plevnik expresses the distinction when he writes,

The cloud image occurs in 1 Thess 4:17, not in v. 16. It thus does not indicate the attendant circumstances of the Lord’s coming, as in the synoptic parousia depictions, which depend on Dan 7:13. All the Synoptics state that the Lord will come “on the clouds of heaven” (Mark 13:26; Matt 24:30; Luke 21:27). This is also the picture in Rev 1:7: “Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.” (cf. Matt 24:30). . . . But according to 1 Thess 4:17, the believers—those still living and those that have been brought to life again—will at the Lord’s coming be taken up “in the clouds (*en nephelais*) to meet the Lord” in the aerial heights. This image is unique in the NT. In view of its specific

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<sup>174</sup> Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” 51.

<sup>175</sup> Charles F. Hogg, and William E. Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (Edinburgh: Oliphants, Ltd., 1919; repr., Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 57.

<sup>176</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 63; Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (rev. and expanded ed.; Chicago: Moody, 2006), 162;

<sup>177</sup> G. Henry Waterman, “Sources of Paul’s Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” *JETS* 18 (1975), 109.

function here, it is necessary to investigate the cloud image not in connection with the Lord's coming from heaven but, rather, in connection with assumptions.<sup>178</sup>

Plevnik states that not only are believers caught up into the clouds but that the clouds are actually the mode of transportation of believers into heaven. He writes,

The cloud in 1 Thess 4:17 is associated with the taking up of living persons body and soul into heaven or into the mode of life associated with the risen Lord. . . . It functions, rather, as a vehicle for transporting a living human being, body and soul, from the earth into heaven. In vv. 16–17 the living faithful are taken up by the clouds to be with the Lord forever, and the text does not mention a return to the earth. As in Rev 11:3–13, the deceased faithful are here first brought back to life, then they are taken up by clouds and transported near to the Lord. This pattern suggests an elevation from life on earth to a life like that of the risen Lord, with whom they live forever.<sup>179</sup>

The image is similar to the assumption of Jesus in Acts 1:9, where the Lord was taken out of their sight into heaven by a cloud. This data further increases the disparity between the Matt 24:29–31 and 1 Thess 4:15–17.

### ***Response 3: 2 Thessalonians 2***

First, Moo argues that “. . . it is illegitimate to separate the Parousia of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the Parousia of 2 Thessalonians 2 in time.”<sup>180</sup> The proposed model agrees that Paul's reference to the *παρουσία* in both texts is referring to the same unified event. The critics' next argument is that the *παρουσία* referenced in 2 Thess 2:8 is the same as the *παρουσία* in verse 1.<sup>181</sup> Significant time has been dedicated in other sections on this point so that it does not need revisiting here; however, it can be noted that the proposed model does provide evidence for a reasonable response to this objection. First, the references to the

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<sup>178</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 60. Cf. Plevnik, “The Taking Up,” 280–81.

<sup>179</sup> Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 63.

<sup>180</sup> Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 193–94.

<sup>181</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 113–14.

παρουσία and the gathering (i.e. rapture) in v. 1 refer to the beginning of the extended period of time called the παρουσία.<sup>182</sup>

Second, the reference to the παρουσία in v. 8 is qualified by the term ἐπιφάνεια, which renders the sense, “the appearing of the parousia.” Rather than referring to the entire παρουσία, Paul identifies a specific event within the extended period, which is the posttribulational visible appearing of His previously veiled presence. Paul can, therefore, reference specific events within the extended event complex by appropriately qualifying the term παρουσία. The παρουσία discussed in v. 1 is the same παρουσία discussed in v. 8. Rather than discussing two *parousias*, as critics object, Paul is discussing two distinct events within the one extended complex of events called the παρουσία. If the semantic range of παρουσία includes as a potential meaning, “invisible extended presence,” which it does for divine beings, and if it is consistently used with this meaning by NT writers, which chapter three suggested, then the distinction being advocated here is reasonable. There is therefore no requirement by Paul’s usage of παρουσία in 2 Thessalonians 2 for two parousias.

#### ***Response 4: The Book of Revelation***

Critics argue that that there is no separate rapture coming mentioned in the book of Revelation,<sup>183</sup> and the only coming of the Lord is posttribulational.<sup>184</sup> While it is true that there is no distinct rapture coming in the book of Revelation,<sup>185</sup> it is also true that there is

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<sup>182</sup> Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” 92.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 223–33; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 102–4; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 71–5.

<sup>184</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 223–33; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 75–77, 96–102.

<sup>185</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 223–33; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 102–4; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 71–5.

no rapture with the posttribulational coming in any potential posttribulational text (Rev 14:1ff.; 16:17ff.; 19:11–21).<sup>186</sup> There is, however, indication that the rapture had already taken place by at least Rev 19:7–10, which is before the posttribulational appearing, since the church, the bride, is already in heaven.<sup>187</sup> Still, there is no undisputed reference to the rapture in the book. The critics’ argument, therefore, that the rapture must occur at the posttribulational coming because it is the only coming in the text is an argument from silence. Moo’s contention that a recapitulation easily resolves “most of the differences cited as requiring a distinction between the pretribulational rapture and the posttribulational coming”<sup>188</sup> affords no assistance here since the proposed model does not attempt to establish the rapture on the basis of distinctions.

Both pretribulationists and posttribulationists must therefore utilize other methods of interpretation to locate, if possible, the timing of the rapture.<sup>189</sup> Since there is no explicit reference to the rapture in the book of Revelation, Blaising states, “This silence per se favors none of the tribulational positions presented in this book.”<sup>190</sup> Blaising further writes that the pretribulational position will have to rely on the integrated understanding of the day of the Lord scenario in Revelation that will build up “a canonical answer to the rapture-tribulation relationship.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Blaising, “The Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 61.

<sup>187</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 368–69.

<sup>188</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 233, n. 107. Moo cites J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 206–7; John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question: A Comprehensive Biblical Study of the Translation of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1957; repr., 1968), 101–2.

<sup>189</sup> John S. Feinberg, “Arguing About the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How?” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 210.

<sup>190</sup> Blaising, “The Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 61.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

Finally, the proposed model would disagree with the argument that there is only one coming in Revelation, and it is posttribulational. While there may be one physical visible descent to earth, with which the proposed model would agree, it was presented in chapter three that the coming of the Lamb to the throne of God in Rev 5:5–14 to take the scroll is the fulfillment of the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:13.<sup>192</sup> This coming was held to be an inaugural event of the *παρουσία* and is pretribulational.

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the above examination, it can be concluded that the proposed model can provide a reasonable explanation for the following: First, the major rapture texts present the inauguration of the *παρουσία* as the descent of the Lord in veiled theophanic glory parallel to the Sinaitic theophany. The *παρουσία* is viewed by Paul as inaugurating the last day of the Lord with much of the imagery indicative of the coming of the Lord in battle. Rather than being raptured up to descend immediately with the clouds in unveiled glory, Paul seems to be indicating that the assumption of believers into heaven taken up and veiled by the clouds.

An analysis of these rapture texts compared with the Olivet Discourse in light of the proposed model indicates that there is sufficient justification for rejecting all alleged parallel elements. The rapture texts indicate the inauguration of a veiled theophany to bring God's retribution upon the earth. Several theophanic markers indicate the existence of theophany on earth before the posttribulational appearing. The elements of the

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<sup>192</sup> James M. Hamilton, Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology* (ed. D. A. Carson; NSBT 32; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 208–9.

posttribulational appearing, while containing elements of theophany are indicative of the moment when the Lord appears, after a period of judgment, to save.

The only indisputable use of the term *παρουσία* in a posttribulational context is 2 Thess 2:8. It is also used in v. 1 to reference the rapture. The examination of this text with the proposed model indicates that these two instances neither require equating the rapture with the posttribulational appearing nor require postulating two parousias. Instead, the proposed model has suggested that since the *παρουσία* is an extended event, and the rapture and posttribulational appearing are two distinct events within the *παρουσία*, then Paul's qualification in these two verses is appropriate.

Finally, the proposed model agreed with the critics' argument that there is no separate rapture coming mentioned in the book of Revelation; however, it noted that there is no reference to the rapture of any kind in the book. For this reason, critics must resort to inferences as well. The critic's argument that there is only one coming, which is posttribulational, was rejected. The proposed model has argued that the coming of the Lamb to the throne in Revelation 5 to receive the scroll is the fulfillment of Dan 7:13 and is pretribulational.

### Response to the Hermeneutical Objection

The hermeneutical element of the two-comings objection states that pretribulationism substitutes a more complex interpretation without sufficient warrant. This objection essentially appeals to Occam's razor.<sup>193</sup> Critics make three basic claims. First, they argue that pretribulationism bypasses a natural interpretation of a singular, unified coming.

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<sup>193</sup> David L. Larsen, "Probing the Critical Nexus of the Two-Stage Parousia" (paper presented at the 2010 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference. Dallas, Tex., December 7, 2010), n. p. [cited 18 October 2015]. Online: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Larsen-TheCriticalNexusofth.pdf>.

Ladd argues, “[T]he natural assumption is that the Rapture of the Church and the Resurrection of the dead in Christ will take place at His glorious coming. The burden of proof rests on those who teach that this is not the proper order of events.”<sup>194</sup> Second, they argue that pretribulationism makes an invalid inference. Ladd writes, “[I]f we were left only to inference, our study has suggested that a single indivisible return of Christ, which requires a posttribulation view, is the inference which is more naturally suggested than that of two comings of Christ with a pretribulation rapture.”<sup>195</sup> If there are “other interpretations which are at least equally possible and valid,” then “pretribulationism is an unnecessary inference.”<sup>196</sup> Third, if the natural reading is to be bypassed in favor of a complex interpretation then “*the burden of proof rests upon the more elaborate explanation.*”<sup>197</sup>

Admittedly, the pretribulation model is more complex than that of the critics, and the proposed model is even more complex than other pretribulation models; however, complexity is not an inherent detriment to the validity of an interpretation. Based on the proposed model, four arguments can be given in response to the hermeneutical objection. First, a “natural” interpretation of coming of the Lord texts creates logical, biblical, and theological problems, many of which currently have no resolution. Second, scripture is admittedly complex even in its unifying themes. Third, precedent exists for viewing an extended complex of events as a unity. Fourth, the proposed model conforms to well-established hermeneutics.

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<sup>194</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 71.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 165 (emphasis in original).

***Response 1: A “Natural” Interpretation of Coming of the Lord Texts Creates Logical, Biblical, and Theological Problems, Many of Which Currently Have No Resolution***

First, the natural reading has been shown by pretribulationists to create numerous logical, biblical, and theological problems. It will not be necessary to examine these problems here because numerous works can be referenced for an in-depth study.<sup>198</sup> The more important observation for the purposes here is that posttribulationists themselves have, to varying degrees, acknowledged at least some of these problems created by a natural reading. Posttribulationists have modified the natural reading to resolve the sign-imminence paradox as well as the problem of population of the kingdom with mortals.<sup>199</sup>

First, Moo acknowledges that a natural reading of the Olivet Discourse introduces a problem when he writes,

In the hortatory section following Christ’s depiction of the Tribulation and Parousia, Jesus makes three important points: (1) The disciples do not know when the Lord will come (Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13); (2) They must therefore watch and be prepared; (3) When they see tribulational events, they can know that Christ is near (Matt 24:32–33). What is particularly crucial to note is that all *three* statements are made with respect to the *same* event—the posttribulational coming of Christ. There is no basis for any transition from the posttribulational aspect of the Parousia in Matt 24:32–35 (or –36) to its pretribulational aspect in verses 36ff. Therefore *all* interpreters, whether they believe the [Olivet] discourse is addressed to the church or to Israel, face the difficulty of explaining how an event heralded by specific signs can yet be one of which it is said, ‘no one knows the day and hour.’<sup>200</sup>

The signs given by scripture that, upon a natural reading, precede the Lord’s coming contradict other texts that explicitly teach the unpredictability of that coming. Moo

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<sup>198</sup> Paul D. Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” in *Three views on the Rapture* (1984), 72–79, examines the various solutions attempted to resolve these problems without resorting to a pretribulation rapture; cf. Feinberg, “Arguing About the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How?” 188–210.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Moo, “The Case for the Midtribulation Rapture Position: Response: Douglas J. Moo (1984), 162–65.

<sup>200</sup> Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (2010), 209 (emphasis in original). Dale C. Allison, Jr., “Eschatology of the NT,” *NIDB* 2:296, writes, “The imminence of the Parousia has created problems for Christian interpreters.”

observes that, for example, in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gives signs of His coming while in Matt 24:36, He declares that no one can know the day or hour. Paul, likewise, also following a natural reading of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, seems to contradict himself. In 1 Thess 5:1–2 he says that the DL will come like a thief in the night while in 2 Thess 2:2–3 he lists two identifiable signs that apparently precede its coming.

Second, Gundry acknowledges that posttribulationism creates a difficulty for populating the millennial kingdom with mortals by teaching that there will be a short period of time between the rapture (posttribulational) and Armageddon.<sup>201</sup> Payne says that there is still time during the period of the wrath of God that allows for repentance after the rapture occurs.<sup>202</sup> Moo postulates that unbelievers will go into the kingdom since not all will be eliminated at Armageddon,<sup>203</sup> however, because all believers will be raptured at the posttribulational appearing, Moo’s solution requires the problematic position that the only mortals to inherit the earthly kingdom will be unbelievers.<sup>204</sup> Critics who reject the pretribulational solution frequently adjust the natural interpretation in order to resolve the contradictions created by the natural reading.<sup>205</sup> By the critics’ own concession, therefore, the natural interpretation must be modified in order to alleviate tensions and contradictions created by that natural interpretation.

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 73–74.

<sup>202</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 142.

<sup>203</sup> cf. Moo, “The Case for the Midtribulation Rapture Position: Response: Douglas J. Moo,” (1984), 162–65.

<sup>204</sup> Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 74–75.

<sup>205</sup> For a complete listing of views and an apt response to each see Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” 72–79.

## ***Response 2: Scripture is Admittedly Complex Even in Its Unifying Theme(s)***

The critics' argument that a natural interpretation is, by default, to be preferred over a complex interpretation seems to overlook the widely acknowledged complexity of biblical hermeneutics.<sup>206</sup> As presented in Part 1 above, scholars have struggled to find one unifying concept of scripture by which the various teachings of scripture could be integrated and interpreted. The inherent complexity of scripture led scholars to abandon the notion of a single, simple interpretive concept. Now, most scholars affirm that a "multiperspectival" approach to interpretation is to be preferred. In this approach several biblical themes are integrated together, each of which are individually developed through a canonical study.<sup>207</sup> Wright, in his discussion of the *parousia*, the coming of the Son of Man with clouds, and the theme of vindication speaks about "the complex and pluriform data" that he examined to provide his interpretation.<sup>208</sup> Given this development in biblical hermeneutics, the critics' premise that the natural and simple reading is to be preferred over the complex is questionable. Add to this development the fact that critics themselves

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<sup>206</sup> Blaising, "A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," 26, in addressing the question of why pretribulationism is a recent development, writes, "Most likely, people did not think much about the relationship of the rapture to the tribulation prior to the popularization of pretribulationism. The reason for this is that through much of the history of Christian thought, the second coming of Christ has been treated as if it is a singular event. . . . This simple view of eschatology was challenged by modern premillennialism, which proposed a more complex understanding of end-time events. Premillennialism predicted a one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth between the second coming and the eternal state. Such a reign divided both the eschatological judgment and the resurrection of the dead into phases separated in time. Furthermore, modern premillennialism brought a renewed interest in the "tribulation" conditions of the second coming. Whereas medieval theology had equated the tribulation either with the early history or the long, ongoing history of the church, modern premillennialism became a forum for the consideration and testing of a futurist view of the tribulation, seeing it as a future time of trouble that would lead to and be the context for the second coming of Christ." He continues, "Working out the interpretation of biblical eschatology into a temporal sequence involving a future tribulation and a future millennium has consistently been affirmed by premillennialists as proper to a historical, grammatical, literary reading of the biblical text. But it raises a number of problems that were glossed over by earlier medieval hermeneutics."

<sup>207</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 36.

<sup>208</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 1. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 464.

recognize that the natural reading generates contradictions that are difficult, if not impossible to resolve, a complex interpretation is virtually necessitated.

***Response 3: Precedent Exists for Viewing an Extended Complex of Events as a Unity***

The hermeneutical objection also oversimplifies eschatological teaching. Both Ladd and Moo list their two-comings objection with the criticism that pretribulationism also requires “two different ‘three and a half’ periods of time, two earthquakes at the end, two trumpet blasts, and two separate resurrections of the saints at the end (Isa 25:6–8; 66:22–24).”<sup>209</sup> By contrast, scripture regularly refers to an eschatological event as if it were a singular and simple event that, in actual fulfillment, is an extended complex of events.

First, scripture references the eschatological resurrection as both a unified event as well as an extended complex of events. For example, Jesus spoke of the first and second resurrections (righteous and wicked) as a single resurrection (John 5:28–29).<sup>210</sup> Moreover, the resurrection of both the just and the unjust will occur in “an hour” that “is coming” (v. 28), which implies that they will occur during the same period of time. Paul, likewise, in at least one place references these two resurrections as if they occurred together (Acts 24:15). Later, he teaches that the resurrection of the righteous had actually already begun with the resurrection of Christ, “the first fruits” (1 Cor 15:23). N. T. Wright notes that Paul introduced a complex view of the resurrection of the righteous in 1 Cor 15:23, which he says Paul now teaches to be a two-stage resurrection (first Jesus,

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<sup>209</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture: A Rejoinder,” (2010), 274; cf. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 165–67.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Matt 25:46; Acts 24:15.

then his people at a later date) . . . .”<sup>211</sup> Paul split this resurrection into two stages without calling into question the singleness of the resurrection doctrine.

If the biblical teaching of the universal, singular resurrection of both the righteous and wicked can be split into a first and second resurrection, and the first resurrection can be split into the resurrection of Christ first and no less than 2,000 years later the resurrection of His people, then what precludes the resurrection of the righteous from occurring in various stages over an extended period? Just as the last days began with the coming (Incarnation) of the Lord (Heb 1:1–2), so also the eschatological resurrection of the last days was initiated by the Lord’s resurrection. The Lord was resurrected, followed immediately by others around Jerusalem and they were the ones who appeared alive in the city (Matt 27:52–53).

There will no doubt be resurrections during and after the millennial kingdom as mortal believers inhabiting the kingdom receive their glorified bodies. These resurrections occur necessarily after the rapture, which took place some time before the full inauguration of the millennial kingdom. Given that there are at least four distinct resurrections of the righteous, it may be better to view the resurrection of the just as not just two phases but as an extended event of numerous distinct resurrections beginning with Christ and continuing until all the righteous have been resurrected.

Second, scripture often refers to the DL as a unity, though, in reality, the DL can reasonably be viewed as an extended period from the *παρουσία* before the millennial kingdom to the re-creation of the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet 3:8–12). Taking just one of the many themes that are incorporated into the end-time eschatological scenario,

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<sup>211</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 462.

such as the judgment and restoration of Israel, shows that the coming of the Lord is a complicated and complex event. Geerhardus Vos writes concerning the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah,

[T]he judgment-eschatology of Amos and Hosea is simple, that of Isaiah and Micah complex. The simple eschatology divides itself into two acts, the judgment and the restoration, both considered as units. With Isaiah and Micah this simple scheme becomes complicated. . . . Both Isaiah and Micah expect a preliminary judgment of Assyria, which they do not identify with the final collapse of the world-power. . . .

From our standpoint we would say that this proximate deliverance stood in a typical relation to the final one. Isaiah and Micah begin to view the judgment after the manner of a process completing itself in successive acts. Assyria will not be the only, nor the last instrument wielded by God in judgment of Israel. After Assyria comes Babylon, mentioned by both prophets [Isaiah 13 and 14; Mic 4:10]. And, besides this specific mention made of Babylon, there still looms in the farther distance an ominous conglomeration of many nations preparing to come up for the attack, and to be destroyed in an even more mysterious, spectacular manner than the proximate foe [Isa 17:12; 24–27, frequently called the Apocalypse of Isaiah; Mic 4:11–13].<sup>212</sup>

If the eschatology of the OT is given due weight in the discussion, as chapters two and three attempted, no simple explanation of the relevant data will suffice.

#### ***Response 4: The Proposed Model Conforms to Well-Established Hermeneutics***

First, scripture may reference an extended complex event as a simple, singular, or unified event. For example, chapter two noted that past days of the Lord are often referred to as a single day while the actual historical fulfillment covered a period up to many years or even thousands of years in length (cf. Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8).<sup>213</sup> The first coming of the Lord

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<sup>212</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Eerdmans, 1948; repr. Carlisle, Pa.; The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 292–93.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 8–13.

is also a historically verifiable example in which the prophets spoke in terms of a single coming but in actuality an extended complex of events was in view.<sup>214</sup>

The Lord's first coming also sets precedence for the Lord's *parousía*. Prewrath advocate Robert Van Kampen writes, "[T]hose who accept the Olivet Discourse in its most natural, normal, customary sense, see only a single *parousía* of Christ that would include different activities occurring after the rapture of His saints (i.e., the wrath of God upon the wicked world remaining, the salvation of Israel, the final battle of Armageddon, etc.), as was the case with His first coming (i.e., His birth, His baptism, His crucifixion, and His resurrection)."<sup>215</sup> Just as His first coming was an extended unified complex of events, so also will be His *παρουσία*.

Second, scripture often depicts a complex and extended event as a unity. Not just a case of unity being reflected in name only, as in the above, a text may also present two distinct events separated by a significant amount of time as one event. This phenomenon is known as "prophetic foreshortening"<sup>216</sup> or "prophetic telescoping."<sup>217</sup> Both of these interpretive tools allow the interpreter, assuming there is adequate exegetical warrant, to view a singular event as an extended complex of events. Paul Feinberg writes concerning prophetic telescoping,

Often in prophetic literature there is the foreshortening of two events so that they appear to be temporally successive, but in fact are separated by many years (e.g., Isa 61:1–2 treats as one the Advent and the Second

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<sup>214</sup> I. Howard Marshall, "The Parousia in the New Testament—and Today," in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (eds. M. J. Wilkins and T. Paige; JSNTSup 87; Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 207, writes, "The centre of gravity of the NT lies in the incarnation of Jesus, in his life, cross and resurrection. This complex event is the focus of our message."

<sup>215</sup> Robert Van Kampen, *The Rapture Question Answered: Plain & Simple* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1997), 97–98.

<sup>216</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, "Could Jesus Return at Any Moment? Rethinking the Imminence of the Second Coming," *TJ* 26 (2005): 283.

<sup>217</sup> J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 532; cf. Eugene H. Merrill, "יָרַד," *NIDOTTE* 2:534–35.

Coming although they are separated by two thousand years; Dan 12:1–2 and John 5:29 refer to both the first and second resurrections, which will be separated by one thousand years).<sup>218</sup>

These techniques are regularly utilized by critics. For example, Anthony Hoekema affirms the use of prophetic foreshortening,<sup>219</sup> and J. Barton Payne utilizes prophetic telescoping in his method.<sup>220</sup>

In a similar manner, the proposed model views the coming of the Lord as an event referenced by scripture writers as a unified singular event while its actual historical fulfillment occurs over many years and incorporates a complex of events. While the proposed model is admittedly complex, the model utilizes a well-known hermeneutic in which a simple event can be interpreted as an extended complex of events, if there is sufficient exegetical warrant. Chapters two and three presented arguments designed to establish this required exegetical warrant. If the proposed model conforms to a well-established interpretive method, and reasonable exegetical warrant is provided, then it cannot be dismissed by an appeal to Occam's razor.

### ***Conclusion***

The critics' model of the coming of the Lord has difficulty integrating the numerous complex biblical themes that are part of the eschatological coming of the Lord. Moreover, the hermeneutical objection that the natural reading is to be preferred is flawed. The only reasonable conclusion is that a natural interpretation creates interpretive dilemmas that require a complex model. The proposed model provides an interpretation

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<sup>218</sup> Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," 78.

<sup>219</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 130–31; cf. Merkle, "Could Jesus Return at Any Moment?" 283.

<sup>220</sup> Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, 532.

that allows for the unity of the references while also allowing for the complexity necessary for numerous events to transpire. Rather than being adding an unnecessary complexity to the doctrine of eschatology, the proposed model provides a reasonable solution to the problems inherent in the simple interpretation with a model that takes into consideration the complexity of the coming of the Lord as evidenced from a canonical perspective. The proposed model therefore provides a reasonable response to the hermeneutical objection.

### Response to the Theological Objection

The theological element of the two-comings objection is comprised of three arguments. First, critics object that the pretribulation rapture improperly divides the saints between Israel and the church.<sup>221</sup> Second, critics object that the church is promised tribulation without removal from it.<sup>222</sup> Third, critics object that an any-moment definition of imminence is not required.<sup>223</sup> The arguments will be responded to in reverse order.

#### ***Response 1: The Sign-Imminence Paradox***

While some critics have argued that a separate rapture coming is not required because they argue that scripture does not teach an any-moment definition of imminence,<sup>224</sup> this objection has not been held by significant segment of critics. Many scholars hold to a

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<sup>221</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 31; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 130–36; cf. Moo, “Posttribulation Rapture Position,” (1984), 207.

<sup>222</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 186–94; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 49; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 123; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 84–8.

<sup>223</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Pretribulation Rapture: A Posttribulation Response,” (2010), 91; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 105–19.

<sup>224</sup> Ben Witherington III, “Transcending Imminence: The Gordian Knot of Pauline Eschatology,” in *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of the New Millennium* (ed. K. Brower and M. Elliot; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 171–86; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 29–43; Millard Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 181.

definition of imminence generally in line with the pretribulationists' definition of "any-moment."<sup>225</sup> Benjamin Merkle writes,

How can we do justice to the verses which exhort us to be constantly ready for Jesus' return in light of the fact that we do not know when it will be? If certain events have yet to be fulfilled, might the church become lackadaisical knowing that Jesus' return is not imminent? In light of these questions, I believe that we must rethink the doctrine of imminence of the second coming and give it more prominence in our lives and our teaching.<sup>226</sup>

While rejecting the pretribulation rapture as a solution, these scholars have reaffirmed a strong doctrine of imminence and attempted to formulate various solutions to resolve the sign-imminence paradox.

The disagreement that pretribulationists would have with these latter critics is that they are able to maintain imminence generally by a weakening of the doctrine of signs.<sup>227</sup> Some critics, such as Anthony Hoekema, hold that it is impossible to correctly identify signs; therefore, the *parousia* is always "impending."<sup>228</sup> Payne agrees, and labels these types of signs, "Potentially Present Antecedents."<sup>229</sup> Payne also identifies a second and third category of signs. Events that occur so near to the *parousia* that they do not nullify

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<sup>225</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 107; Merkle, "Could Jesus Return At Any Moment?" 291; Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 129–36; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1992), 351–80; David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT 1; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 565–611; W. D. Davies and D. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: Commentary on Matthew 19–28* (ICC 3; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 374.

<sup>226</sup> Merkle, "Could Jesus Return At Any Moment?" 279–80.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 279–92; Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 129–36; cf. Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," 50; Robert L. Thomas, "The Doctrine of Imminence in Two Recent Eschatological Systems," *BSac* 157 (2000): 452–467.

<sup>228</sup> Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 130, writes, "If these signs point to certain events which must still occur before Jesus comes again, how can we be always ready for that return? Does not a consideration of these signs carry with it the danger of pushing off the return of Christ into the far-distant future, so that we no longer need to be concerned about being always ready? Is not the lack off a lively expectation of the Parousia among many Christians today perhaps due to an excessive emphasis on the doctrine of the signs of the times?" Cf. Merkle, "Could Jesus Return At Any Moment?" 291.

<sup>229</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 106–32.

imminence he labels “Future Antecedents.”<sup>230</sup> Finally, all major signs that have occurred already, he labels “Alleged (Actually Past) Antecedents.”<sup>231</sup>

As it stands, no position to date has provided a model for the coming of the Lord that successfully maintains all four elements (signs, imminence, inerrancy, and unity) without compromising or redefining some aspect of at least one. Payne succinctly summarizes this point,

The classical viewpoint believed in the imminence of Christ’s coming, and in His unified, post-tribulational appearing; but it could not allow prolonged antecedents to the advent. Dispensational pre-tribulationism was committed to prolonged antecedents and thus could preserve imminence only at the sacrifice of the unified appearing. Reacting post-tribulationism, on the contrary, retained the hope in the unified return but was forced, because of its continued belief in lengthy antecedents, to surrender the hope of imminency.<sup>232</sup>

Assuming, then, that a sufficient portion of critics affirm the importance of imminence to a correct understanding of the coming of the Lord, the best response to this objection is to propose a reasonable solution to the signs-imminence paradox while affirming the unity of the coming of the Lord. The signs-imminence paradox seems to be resolved with the proposed model’s view of the coming of the Lord and an examination of the meaning of signs.

The nature of signs must be understood not as events that precede and herald the *παρουσία*/DL, as critics maintain, but as identifiers of the presence of an invisible reality.

At least one critic, Hoekema, holds a similar view of the meaning of signs. He

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 133–34, writes, “They [some prophecies] do precede the appearing of Christ. Here we should include certain elements of the wrath of God, such as the great earthquake and the sun being darkened (Matt 24:29, cf. the first four trumpets and bowls of God’s wrath in Rev 8 and 16:1–9). But as long as the Lord protects His people from these things (and He does: 1 Thess 5:9; Rev 7:1–3), and as long as they are restricted to events that last only a few minutes (and this is all they do: Luke 21:28), then such matters do not invalidate the Church’s imminent hope.”

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 145–59.

<sup>232</sup> Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 158. On page 41 Payne defines the classical viewpoint as the “classical combination of imminency and the post-tribulational, one-phase coming.”

categorizes signs under the following three headings: “1) *Signs evidencing the grace of God*; 2) *Signs indicating opposition to God*; 3) *Signs indicating divine judgment*.”<sup>233</sup> In each case the signs indicate a present reality. The proposed model has argued for this view of signs at least regarding 2 Thessalonians 2 with the apostasy and the revelation of the lawless one (2 Thess 2:3–4).

In OT theophanies, the LORD’s immanent veiled presence was manifested by signs, wonders, by war, and by great terrors (cf. Deut 4:34).<sup>234</sup> Chapter two pointed out that during the Exodus, the LORD descended to observe the condition of Israel before He even appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Afterwards, the invisible presence of the LORD went with Moses, and the LORD gave him a sign by which Moses would know that the LORD was with him and had sent him (v. 12). The presence of the Lord was also said to be signified by a plague, “But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur” (Exod 8:22–23).

Similarly, the Lord gave the prophets signs as evidence of the Lord’s directly working in history (Isa 8:18). Signs were also given for the prophets to perform to be witnessed by the people so that when the historical events occurred, which the signs represented, the people would remember the sign and recognize that the actual event was the intervention of the Lord (Isa 20:3; Ezek 4:3; 12:6, 11; 24:24–27). In these uses, signs are not principally events that portend the near occurrence of an event; rather, they

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<sup>233</sup> Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 137 (emphasis in original); For #1 he lists (a) The proclamation of the gospel to all nations; (b) The salvation of the fullness of Israel. For #2 he lists (a) Tribulation; (b) Apostasy; (c) Antichrist. For #3 he lists (a) Wars; (b) Earthquakes; (c) Famines. Cf. pp. 138–63.

<sup>234</sup> G. Wehmeier, “עלה, to go up,” *TLOT* 2:891.

indicate that the Lord was actively intervening in history in the events that the signs represent.

The NT continues the same understanding of signs as indicating the thing present rather than heralding something that is coming. In John, miracles are referred to as “signs,” not of events that were about to occur but as indicating the presence of a current event, i.e., the work of God through Jesus, who is the Christ. John 2:11 states of the miracle at Cana, “This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. Thus the sign of the miracle manifested the invisible reality of His glory to His disciples. Throughout this gospel “sign” is used to indicate the existence of something not directly observable (cf. 2:18, 23; 4:48, 54; 6:2; 12:18, etc.; Acts 2:22). Nicodemus tells Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). Nicodemus was able to know that God was presently with Jesus because of the signs that Jesus was presently performing.

Two signs have already been identified, which are the apostasy and the revelation of the lawless one (2 Thess 2:3–4). While Paul does not specifically use the word “sign,” the idea is the same. The argument was already presented in chapter three that these two events are not events preceding the *παρουσία* and DL, but as events indicating the current presence of the day. To that argument could be added that the proposed model understands the *παρουσία* to be an extended theophanic presence-coming of the Lord parallel to OT theophanies. During the Exodus, the Lord was invisibly present in Egypt, directly intervening in history through the plagues (Exod 8:22–23). Rather than being an inconvenience to the Lord, Pharaoh was part of God’s plan. In Romans 9:17, Paul quotes

God’s declaration concerning Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth” (Rom 9:17; cf. LXX Exod 9:16). While the Lord was invisibly present in Egypt pouring out the plagues, God had already superintended the advent of Pharaoh and specifically used him so that God could fully demonstrate His power throughout the earth.

Critics’ objection that a distinct signless rapture coming is not required because an “any-moment” definition of imminence is not required can be said to have been answered by the proposed model for three reasons. First, a significant segment of critics would disagree that imminence is not necessary, which undercuts the basis of this objection. Second, critics who maintain imminence have sacrificed a strong view of signs, which demonstrates that no agreement has been reached on how to effectively resolve the signs-imminence paradox. Third, the proposed model has provided a model that maintains both a strong view of imminence and signs while maintaining the unity of the coming of the Lord, which was the focus of the original objection.

### ***Response 2: The Church is Promised Both Tribulation and Removal From It***

In response to the second argument, the proposed model would begin by affirming with critics that the church is not promised exemption from tribulations. Christians are appointed unto tribulations, distress, and persecutions<sup>235</sup> for the testing of their faith,<sup>236</sup> which in some way represents their union with Christ.<sup>237</sup> In His high priestly prayer,

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<sup>235</sup> John 16:33; Phil 1:29; 1 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12.

<sup>236</sup> There are numerous texts to demonstrate that Christians suffer tribulations for the testing of their faith, including Rom 5:3–5; Jas 1:2–3; 1 Pet 1:6–7; Rev 1:9.

<sup>237</sup> John 15:18–20; 16:33; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21; 3:10–11.

Jesus prayed that His disciples not be taken out of the world (John 17:15) with the full realization that they would be hated by the world (v. 14).

Disagreement arises regarding the relationship of current tribulations, which believers are appointed to, and the future Tribulation, which most pretribulationists and many critics agree refers to Daniel's seventieth week.<sup>238</sup> Pretribulationists maintain a clear distinction between the present tribulations and the future Tribulation.<sup>239</sup> Some critics, however, would not see a direct correspondence between the future Tribulation and Daniel's seventieth week.<sup>240</sup>

Moo argues that rather than a qualitative distinction between these two periods of tribulation, it is better to see it as only a quantitative distinction. He writes, "Nothing in these texts suggests that the suffering of the final tribulation will be any greater in degree than what many believers throughout the age must suffer. True, the extreme sufferings of the final period may be greater in extent, afflicting many more Christians than it does now, but this does not constitute a reason to exempt Christians from it."<sup>241</sup> While posttribulationists typically see a blending of these two periods of tribulation, with the latter being the climax at the end of an age of tribulation(s),<sup>242</sup> most nevertheless accept that the Tribulation constitutes a unique future period of unparalleled distress.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Daniel 9:27; cf. vv. 24–27.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," 50–72.

<sup>240</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture" (2010), 185–94; Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 123.

<sup>241</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture" (2010), 192.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 188; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167, allows for the possibility of a future tribulation though not necessarily the ability to positively identify it. Payne, *The Imminent Appearing*, 123, completely removes a futurist interpretation so that "potentially present antecedents" could be occurring now without believers being able to identify them.

<sup>243</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 188, writes, "I am not suggesting that the end of the age will be exactly like our present time. The New Testament clearly refers to an especially intense and worldwide suffering for God's people that will come at the end of history, to a climactic person of evil—the Antichrist—who will challenge God and persecute his people, and to a climactic experience of God's wrath. But my point here is to insist that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament see these events

The principal issue about the presence of church age believers being present during Daniel's seventieth week is that the proposed model does in fact see a qualitative versus a quantitative distinction between the current tribulations endured by the church and the future Tribulation that will come upon the world. First, both constitute a testing upon a group of individuals that leads to discipline, sanctification, and, if the first two do not produce holiness, then wrath comes. It was suggested that the NT presents the current age as a period of tribulations, testing, and sanctification upon the church and believers with no corresponding testing and sanctification upon the world (e.g., 1 Pet 4:12–18); however, there will come a time when the testing that is exclusive upon believers will be poured upon the entire world (Rev 3:10).

No distinction between the wrath of Satan versus the wrath of God is necessary since all Satanic wrath is only granted by God in the heavenly court. The future parousia of the antichrist is restrained until the restrainer (whoever or whatever it may be) is removed (2 Thess 2:6–8). It also seems reasonable that the wrath of the antichrist, through the power of Satan, is divinely decreed as indicated by 2 Thess 2:10–12, where Paul says that the lawless one comes “with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in

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not as belonging to a new period in salvation history but as the climax to an era already begun.” Cf. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 49; For an extensive discussion of this view see G. K. Beale, “The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology,” in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of the New Millennium* (ed. K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliott; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 11–52.

wickedness.”<sup>244</sup> God is ultimately sovereignly directing wicked agents to bring about His purposes.<sup>245</sup>

Second, a qualitative distinction between the two periods can be found in the role of the Lord Jesus Christ. Currently, the Lord is at the right hand of the Father “waiting until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet” (Heb 10:13). This event will occur at His parousia, which has elsewhere been suggested has not begun yet (1 Cor 15:23–28). Furthermore, it was presented in chapter three that numerous NT texts present the Lord currently fulfilling Ps 110:1 but not currently fulfilling Dan 7:13. Moreover, the Lord’s current ministry, as depicted in Rev 1:12–3:22, is to minister to the churches by judging them according to their deeds, and rendering according to those deeds; whereas beginning in Rev 5:5 the scope of His ministry becomes global as His opening of the seven sealed scroll has global, and even universal consequences.

The context of the Lord’s promise to the church of Philadelphia in Rev 3:10 is given just prior to the transition between these two roles. It appears that the Lord is looking back over His judgment upon the churches and on the basis of their perseverance in the Gospel is promising that they will be spared the similar testing that will engulf the world. Just as the world had no part in being testing with the church so also the true church will have no part in being tested with the world (cf. 1 Pet 4:17–19).

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. In Rev 13:12–18, God sends a deluding influence as part of his judgment. cf. Isa 19:3, 14; Jer 4:10; Zeph 1:17 (in the context of the day of the Lord, and distress; Zeph 1:14–18. See also Acts 28:25–28; Rom 11:7–10; Matt 13:14f.

<sup>245</sup> God will raise up the lawless one (Zech 11:16–17). God will "put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled" (Rev 17:17).

### ***Response 3: Improper Mixing of the Saints Between Israel and the Church***

While other pretribulation models may utilize a distinction between Israel and the Church,<sup>246</sup> the distinction was not the basis of any argument of the proposed model presented in this study. By contrast, the proposed model has established its view of the rapture based on a canonical study of four key biblical themes and their interrelation. Since ecclesiological considerations were not included in the proposed model, this objection is not valid for this model.

### ***Conclusion***

Based on this data, the proposed model is a sufficient response to the theological element of the two-comings objection to pretribulationism.

#### Response to the Practical Objection

The practical element of the two-comings objection states that the exhortations given to the church indicate that there is no distinction between the Lord's coming at the rapture and His coming at the end of the Tribulation.<sup>247</sup> Critics typically emphasize three points. First, critics object that exhortations to the church do not require a separate rapture coming but instead point to one unified coming after the Tribulation. Second, critics object that Paul's response in 2 Thessalonians 2 to that church's anxiety does not require a distinct rapture coming. Third, principally in 2 Thessalonians 2 but also in regards to Revelation 4–19, critics argue that the teaching regarding Tribulational events in these

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<sup>246</sup> E.g. Pentecost, *Things to Come*; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*; Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," 47–86.

<sup>247</sup> Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," (2010), 196; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 105–111; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 11–12, 105–19.

two major texts written to the churches are largely pointless for those to whom they were written in a pretribulation system.

***Response 1: In an Extended Unified Coming Exhortations Focus on the Beginning***

Critics' claim that exhortations point to the posttribulational appearing are based on their view that the *παρουσία*, *ἀποκάλυψις*, *ἐπιφάνεια* are references to that event. By contrast, the proposed model holds that these terms are referring either to the extended complex of events as a unit (*παρουσία* and *ἀποκάλυψις*; cf. 1 Cor 1:7; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15–17; 2 Thess 1:5–7; 2:1, etc.) or to His appearing to believers only at the beginning of His extended veiled presence-coming (*ἐπιφάνεια*; cf. 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:8; Titus 2:13; 1 John 2:28–3:2). If, as the proposed model argues, the coming of the Lord is an extended unified complex of events, in which the *παρουσία* of the Lord refers to His extended veiled presence, exhortations naturally focus on the beginning of the period rather than the duration itself. Warren writes,

Much of the difficulty of reaching any consistent view of the Parousia has arisen from the impression that it was to occupy only a brief space of time, rather than a long period. Doubtless our English version has strengthened if not created that impression, by uniformly translating the Greek preposition *ἐν*, in this connection, by *at*, a word that we apply rather to a *point* of time than a prolonged duration. To say that something shall occur *at* Christ's coming, conveys a perceptibly different shade of meaning from saying it shall take place *in* or *during* his Presence. Yet a mere glance at a Greek Concordance will show that the instances in which the word elsewhere means and is rendered *in* are at least ten times as numerous as where it means and is translated *at*.<sup>248</sup>

NT exhortations make no distinction between the Lord's coming at the rapture and His coming at the end of the Tribulation because none is required. For the NT body of

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<sup>248</sup> Warren, *The Parousia*, 32 (emphasis original).

believers, the only event that is important is the rescue that occurs at the beginning of the period inaugurated by His coming (cf. 2 Thess 1:4–7).

Exhortations to “watch” or be “ready” (Matt 24:37, 39; Luke 12:35–40), which could be addressed to either believers or unbelievers, likewise refer to the beginning of the presence-coming of the Lord, which will inaugurate the DL and the Tribulation. These exhortations are usually seen by parables of the coming master and the thief in the night. Robert Thomas has persuasively argued that these images of imminence, which recur throughout the NT, originate in the teachings of Jesus and present a dual imminence of blessing and wrath.<sup>249</sup> To those who are waiting eagerly for their master to come will be blessed when He arrives while those who are not watching judgment will come upon them unexpectedly like a thief in the night (Matt 24:36–44; Luke 12:35–48; 17:22–37). With the proposed model’s view of the coming of the Lord, these two images perfectly describe the beginning of the *παρουσία*/DL extended complex of events. For those who are eagerly awaiting the Lord, they will be caught up in the clouds when He comes to visit the earth. For those who are not ready the Lord will come when they are not expecting Him and they will be caught up in the DL (1 Thess 5:2–3).<sup>250</sup>

### ***Response 2: Paul’s Response to the Thessalonians’ Anxiety is Reasonable***

Posttribulationists, with a simple model of the coming of the Lord, argue that if pretribulationism is true the Paul’s response to the Thessalonian church’s anxiety is, at best, insufficient.<sup>251</sup> Moreover, rather than affirming that the Thessalonians would be exempted from the wrath of the Antichrist, “Paul writes as though Christians needed to

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<sup>249</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “Imminence in the NT, Especially Paul’s Thessalonian Epistles,” *MSJ* 13 (2002): 191–214.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.; Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 64–73.

<sup>251</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74.

be warned against the deception of the Antichrist . . . .”<sup>252</sup> Critics do not see any reason for Paul to portray so clearly these Tribulational events if he knew they would never witness them. Many of the Thessalonians believed “that the Second Coming” was “already in process”<sup>253</sup> (2 Thess 2).

For the proposed model, these two events are more foundational than any other model, pretribulational or otherwise, has advocated. These events do not precede the coming of the Lord as critics argue; nor are they simply signs that demonstrate the presence of the DL, as proponents of Model 3 argue. The proposed model holds these events as integral and necessary elements of the coming of the Lord. The two events listed by Paul, the apostasy and the revelation of the lawless one, are exactly the order of events that the proposed model expects will occur at the presence-coming of the Lord on the DL. First, the proposed model holds that the *παρουσία* of the Lord is an extended theophanic presence-coming of the Lord like those portrayed in the OT, in which He is actively intervenes in human history for testing, judgment, and wrath. The beginning of this extended period of His veiled presence will occur imminently and secretly, like a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:2).

Like those OT theophanies in which the Lord came, veiled in His storm-cloud, to test the people and render judgment according to their deeds, the *παρουσία* will inaugurate a period of the veiled presence of the Lord in which He will test the whole world (Rev 3:10) by false revelation, false prophets, the lawless one and signs and false wonders. Why does Paul mention these events if he knew they would not witness them?

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 159.

The reason is because they are part of the gospel itself inasmuch as the gospel is the word of the Lord for salvation and judgment (cf. Rom 2:16).

Moreover, there is no guarantee that all those in the Thessalonian church will be raptured before this time (those who are not truly saved); therefore, they will witness these events. Paul also likely knew that his teaching would be heard by others who were not redeemed and would serve as a warning of the coming judgment. For those who do “not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” and who do “not believe the truth, but [take] pleasure in wickedness” (2 Thess 2:10, 12), Paul teaches, “God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged” (vv. 11–12).

A full development is neither possible nor necessary here; however, in response to the objection that Paul’s teaching is pointless in a pretribulation system,<sup>254</sup> the proposed model would affirm that it is a critical element of the future coming of the Lord that always occurs in accord with the prophetic word of the Lord. Like the prophets of the OT, Paul is the vehicle by which the word of the Lord comes to proclaim coming events that will occur in history by the active intervention of God in judgment. Regardless whether an individual witnesses the events portrayed by Paul or not, the message affects all who hear it. This teaching serves as a warning of divine judgment that is coming upon those who reject the truth. Those who respond in faith and obedience will be rescued from this wrath (1 Thess 1:10) while those who reject it will endure that period of testing, deception, and the judgment to follow. During that period, the revelation of the Lord will

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<sup>254</sup> Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74; cf. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 206–12; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167.

occur to those who recognize that the events they witness are in accord with the word of the Lord given here.

***Response 3: A Pretribulational Rescue Does Not Render the Word of God Meaningless***

The last practical argument is that the teaching regarding Tribulational events in these two major texts written to the churches are largely pointless for those to whom they were written in a pretribulation system.<sup>255</sup> This argument has application for the Olivet Discourse, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 4–19. Concerning the latter Moo writes, “[I]t simply appears improbable that the event described at greatest length in Revelation (the sufferings of the righteous in chaps. 6–16) would have no direct relevance for those to whom the book is addressed.”<sup>256</sup>

The proposed model’s understanding of the process of revelation can suggest a possible response to this objection. As presented in chapter two and confirmed in chapter three, the word of the Lord came to the prophet of the coming of the Lord in salvation and judgment. The word consisted of the events of judgment and the way of escape. The prophet then declared to all the people to whom the message pertained the coming judgment and the way of salvation. Those who believed the word and were obedient to the way of salvation were said to “listen and obey.”<sup>257</sup> Those who were obedient to the word of the Lord were spared from the wrath of God predicted by the word of the Lord.

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<sup>255</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 206–12; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 167; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 74.

<sup>256</sup> Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” (2010), 223.

<sup>257</sup> Van Pelt and Kaiser, *NIDOTTE 2:527–33*; cf. Deut 4:10; Ps 119:63. See also Kent L. Yinger, “To Each According to Deeds: Divine Judgment According to Deeds in Second Temple Judaism and in Paul’s Letters” (Ph. D. diss., The University of Sheffield, 1995), 82, writes, “One’s works of obedience are not viewed as *merits*, each to be recompensed in atomistic fashion, but instead are the observable manifestations of the covenant loyalty of the unseen heart” (emphasis in original); cf. pp. 67–68, “Note Jer 17 where works manifest one’s faith, and it is actually such unseen matters which form the basis of divine judgment.”

Individuals then committed deeds of obedience or disobedience to the word based on the hidden nature of the person's heart. In this manner the secrets of the person's heart was revealed.

In the NT, the gospel, the word of God, was sent through the Lord Jesus Christ and through those whom He commissioned (Heb 2:1–4). While the churches are the direct recipients of the word of God they are not the final recipients. The word of God is for all humanity from the time that the word is delivered by the Spirit to His ordained speaker, which in this age is the church itself, “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Inasmuch as the church is to spread the gospel it is spreading the word of God of salvation and of judgment. As Paul said, “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life” (2 Cor 2:15–16). In Rom 2:16, Paul wrote concerning the coming judgment, “on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

All humanity will be held accountable by the teaching of the word of God concerning salvation and judgment. Jesus said, “If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; . . . He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:47–48). Such is the meaning of Heb 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” This statement by the writer of Hebrews was given in the context of his discussion of the good news, the word of God, being preached to the ancient Israelites and their

disobedience (vv. 1–2, 6, 10–11). The character of their hearts was manifested by their obedience or disobedience to the word (v. 7).

The book of Revelation is also part of the word that Jesus spoke, which will judge each individual on the last day (Rev 1:1; John 12:48). The Revelation was also not given to the church only, though the prophecy is addressed to the seven churches (1:4). If the addressees indicate the intended audience, then it stands to reason that the prophecy was intended for no other church besides those seven. Rather, the true audience is anyone as indicated by 1:3, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Only after this statement concerning the prophecy’s universal audience does John address the churches (v. 4).

Repeatedly, the statement is made in Revelation, ““He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). It seems that that these who have an ear and hear are not part of the churches; therefore, they are not saved. Later, the statement is broadened so that there is no doubt that everyone who hears the word of Revelation is accountable: “If anyone has an ear, let him hear” (Rev 13:9; cf. 22:7, 17–18). Moreover, like the OT word of the Lord, these words are meant to test those who hear them. It is indicative of the "testing" of the Lord. Compare Deut 13:3. by contrast, Israel should listen to a true prophet and when the Lord sends one he is testing them whether they are obedient. Matt 11:15; cf. Ezek 3:27. Prophetic and refers to the prophet of God with the message of God and the judgment based on reception or rejection of that message.

## ***Conclusion***

The critics' interpretation of these texts is not in question. The proposed model is only attempting here to provide a reasonable explanation of the texts in question. Since the proposed model argues that NT teaching concerning the time of the Tribulation is part of the word of the Lord for salvation and judgment and is not directed only to the church but to the entire world, it is not rendered meaningless in a pretribulation system. Based on this data, the proposed model is a sufficient response to the practical element of the two-comings objection to pretribulationism.

## **Part 3–Conclusion**

The purpose of this dissertation has been to propose a model of the coming of the Lord that can reasonably respond to the two-comings objection, a model which is exegetically supported, theologically reasonable, and maintains a unified coming of the Lord. This objection begins with the premise that the NT uniformly presents, and the church has historically affirmed that the coming of the Lord is a single, future, glorious, posttribulational event. Because pretribulationism teaches that the rapture will occur at least seven years prior to the glorious posttribulational appearing of the Lord the view requires two second comings of the Lord. It is concluded that because two comings are necessitated by the pretribulation view, it contradicts scripture and the historic belief of the church; therefore, it must be rejected. In response to this objection, it was the thesis of this dissertation that viewing the coming of the Lord as an extended unified complex of events provides a reasonable response to the criticism that a pretribulation rapture requires two “second comings” of the Lord.

Chapter one analyzed the two-comings objection and discovered that it consists of six elements: 1) the historical element; 2) the lexical element; 3) the exegetical element; 4) the hermeneutical element; 5) the theological element; and, 6) the practical element. Chapter one also surveyed the current pretribulation models and classified them on the basis on how they respond to the two-comings objection. Three models were discovered. Model 1 argued that the rapture and the glorious appearing are two distinct comings. Model 2 argued that the rapture and the glorious appearing are two phases of one second coming; however, there was little indication of any unifying element or event to link the rapture and glorious appearing under a single event called “the second coming.” Like Model 1, there was a descent from heaven, a rapture, and an ascent back to heaven until the time of the posttribulational appearing. Model 3 argued that the rapture occurred at the coming of the Lord, which is pretribulational. The Lord descends from heaven in the clouds to rapture believers up to Himself. The Lord remains present, veiled in the clouds above the earth, pouring out divine wrath upon the earth for seven years. At the end of the Tribulation, the clouds break away and the presence of the glory of the Lord is visually manifested to the world as He continues His descent to the earth at His posttribulational appearing.

Based on this analysis as well as an analysis of the problems of current pretribulational models, chapter one concluded that another model was needed. The new model based on Model 3 would need to address fully the concerns of the critics that would provide for a unified coming of the Lord. Second, the model would need to avoid the ambiguous use of terminology that has implied that the rapture and glorious appearing are two distinct comings. Third, the model would need to integrate current

lexical scholarship. Fourth, the model would need to standardize use of key Greek words. Fifth, the model would need to integrate the rapture into a biblical coming of the Lord theme.

Chapters two and three presented evidence to support the proposed model based on lexical and exegetical evidence from the Old Testament (OT), Hebrew Second Temple Literature (ST), and the New Testament (NT). The coming of the Lord is best understood as one theme in a complex motif that also includes the themes, the revelation of the Lord, the sovereignty of the Lord, and the day of the Lord (DL). Evidence supporting the proposed model was presented from each of these thematic elements. Potential objections to the proposed model were addressed in a separate section in chapter three. All objections could be classified as events that are usually taken to occur before the DL and therefore the coming of the Lord.

Chapter four began by offering both a defense and explanation as to why and how the coming of the Lord as a biblical theme could be integrated with the other three themes into a complex motif. First, because the coming of the Lord has received mixed attention among scholars most scholarship on the theme is incorporated in one of the other themes. The coming of the Lord refers to the immanent presence of the Lord, which is His direct historical intervention. The coming of the Lord is a canonical theme that is interrelated with the doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the Lord. The complex unifying concept serves as an interpretive framework for understanding the doctrine of the coming of the Lord within the context of the doctrines of revelation and sovereignty. This method provides greater clarity to the proposed model of the coming of the Lord. Finally, the coming of the Lord occurs during a specific time frame, which

Scripture writers often refer to as a particular period of activity of the Lord in history. Often this time period is referred to as the day of the Lord.

Part 2 of chapter four was the evaluation of the thesis: does an extended, unified complex of events view of the coming of the Lord provide a reasonable response to the two-comings objection? A response was provided to five out of the six elements of the two-comings objection based on the proposed model's view of the coming of the Lord. It was concluded that the proposed model provides a reasonable response to each element of the objection. Because the proposed model has provided a reasonable response to each of the five elements of the two-comings objection to pretribulationism, it is therefore a reasonable response to the two-comings objection to pretribulationism.

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