

# *A Comparison of the Coming of Christ*

## As Seen in “Prophecy” and “Mystery”

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OBJECTIVE: To encourage the study of whether the “coming” of Christ mentioned by Paul is the same “coming” that is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

### 1. Both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” anticipate the “COMING” of Jesus Christ.

#### “PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:27, 30 – “... The **COMING** of the Son of man be ... And they shall see the Son of man **COMING** in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

#### “MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 1:7 – “So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the **COMING** of our Lord Jesus Christ”

I Corinthians 4:5 “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord **COME**, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

I Corinthians 15:23 – “... They that are Christ’s at his **COMING**.”

I Thessalonians 2:19 – “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his **COMING**?”

I Thessalonians 3:13 – “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the **COMING** of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”

I Thessalonians 4:15 – “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the **COMING** of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.”

I Thessalonians 5:23 – “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the **COMING** of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II Thessalonians 1:10 – “When he shall **COME** to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe because our testimony among you was believed in that day.”

II Thessalonians 2:1 – “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the **COMING** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him”

II Thessalonians 2:8 – “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his **COMING**”

If Christ came once, then wouldn't His next coming be His second? And how many second comings are there? If there are two more comings of Christ, wouldn't the “second” second coming really be the “third” coming? Or are all the future “comings” really the same?

## 2. Both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” anticipate the “REVELATION” of Jesus Christ.

“PROPHECY”

Luke 17:30 – “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is **REVEALED**.”

“MYSTERY”

II Thessalonians 1:7 – “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be **REVEALED** from heaven with his mighty angels,”

There is often a distinction made between the “Revelation” and the “Rapture.”

## 3. Both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” anticipate the “APPEARING” of Jesus Christ.

“PROPHECY”

Hebrews 9:28 – “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he **APPEAR** the second time without sin unto salvation.”

I Peter 1:7 – “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that

*perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the **APPEARING** of Jesus Christ:”*

*I Peter 5:4 – “And when the chief Shepherd shall **APPEAR**, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*

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

*I John 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall **APPEAR**, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

“MYSTERY”

*Colossians 3:4 – “When Christ, who is our life, shall **APPEAR**, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*

*I Timothy 6:14 – “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the **APPEARING** of our Lord Jesus Christ:”*

*II Timothy 4:1 – “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his **APPEARING** and his kingdom;”*

*II Timothy 4:8 – “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his **APPEARING**.”*

*Titus 2:13 – “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious **APPEARING** of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”*

Sometimes it is suggested that the “appearing” of Jesus Christ be distinguished from His “revelation.”

#### **4. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ comes IN THE CLOUDS.**

“PROPHECY”

*Matthew 24:30 – “... And they shall see the Son of man coming **IN THE CLOUDS** of heaven with power and great glory.”*

“MYSTERY”

*I Thessalonians 4:17 – “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them **IN THE CLOUDS**, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

**5. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds WITH ANGELS.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:31 – “And he shall send **HIS ANGELS** ...”

“MYSTERY”

I Thessalonians 4:16 – “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of **THE ARCHANGEL** ...”

It is interesting to note that there is only one other usage of the word “archangel” in the Bible. That reference is Jude 9. This archangel is said to be Michael. A look at Daniel 12:1 will show that he “standeth for the children of thy people [Israel]”:

*“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”*

What is Michael the archangel, that standeth for Israel, doing at the “special coming” for the body of Christ?

**6. In both “Prophecy and Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds with His angels and with a TRUMPET BLOWN.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:31 – “And he shall send his angels with a **GREAT SOUND OF A TRUMPET** ...”

“MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 15:52 – “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at **THE LAST TRUMP**: for **THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND** ...”

I Thessalonians 4:16 – “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with **THE TRUMP** of God ...”

**7. In both “Prophecy and Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds with His angels, a trumpet, and that Trumpet is the LAST TRUMPET.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:29, 31 – “**IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION** of those days ... He shall send His angels with a **GREAT SOUND OF A TRUMPET** ...”

“MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 15:52 – “... At **THE LAST TRUMP**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Paul taught that the coming of Christ would take place at a specific time, “at the last trump.” The last trump means there are earlier trumps. If this is a special “last trump” which is distinctly for the Body of Christ, where are the preceding ones?

According to Revelation chapters 8-11 there will be a series of seven trumpets blown prior to the second coming of Christ. Interestingly enough, at the seventh and final trumpet (or last trump) recorded in Revelation 11:15, there is a resurrection of saints. At that time these saints are also judged and rewarded (:15-18).

**8. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds with His angels, with a trumpet, last trumpet, and WITH HIS SAINTS.**

“PROPHECY”

Jude 1:14 – “... Behold, the Lord cometh **WITH** ten thousands of **HIS SAINTS**,”

“MYSTERY”

I Thessalonians 3:13 – “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **WITH ALL HIS** [dead] **SAIN**T**S**.”

**9. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds with His angels, with a trumpet, last trumpet, with His (dead) saints and will GATHER the living saints.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:31 – “And they shall **GATHER TOGETHER** his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

“MYSTERY”

II Thessalonians 2:1 – “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our **GATHERING TOGETHER** unto him”

**10. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ comes in the clouds with His angels, with a trumpet, last trumpet, and gathers the saints SUDDENLY in an UNEXPECTED hour.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:42 – “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

“MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 15:52 – “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... ”

I Thessalonians 5:6 – “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

**11. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” the coming of Christ was in ACCORDANCE with THE PROPHETS.**

“PROPHECY”

Jude 1:14 – “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, **PROPHESIED** of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all ...”

“MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 15:54 – “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, **THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN**, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

**12. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” there will be a FALLING AWAY (apostasy) before Christ’s coming.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:11, 12 – “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

“MYSTERY”

II Thessalonians 2:1-3 – “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken ... for that day shall not come, except there come a **FALLING AWAY** first ... ”

**13. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ’s coming will be at THE END.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:13 – “But he that shall endure unto **THE END**, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall **THE END** come.”

“MYSTERY”

I Corinthians 1:7, 8 – “So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto **THE END**, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**14. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ’s coming is with GLORY and POWER.**

“PROPHECY”

Matthew 24:30 – “... And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with **POWER** and great **GLORY**.”

“MYSTERY”

II Thessalonians 1:9 – “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the **GLORY** of his **POWER**”

**15. In both “Prophecy” and “Mystery” Christ’s coming is with WRATH.**

“PROPHECY”

Revelation 11:15, 18 – “And the seventh angel sounded ... and thy **WRATH** is come ... ”

“MYSTERY”

II Thessalonians 1:7-10 – “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In **FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE** on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be **PUNISHED** with everlasting **DESTRUCTION** from the presence of the Lord ... ”

**16. Paul was bound with a chain for the “hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). This hope was resurrection hope (Acts 23:6; 24:13-16; 26:6-8). This hope was Paul’s “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).**

**Conclusion:** The coming of Christ as taught in the Pauline Epistles and the rest of the Scriptures appear to be the same. Nowhere, to our knowledge, can we find a Pauline PASSAGE that TEACHES us that the “coming” for the Body was not the same “coming” of prophetic Scripture. Nowhere that we know of does Paul teach that the timing of the “rapture” will occur seven years before Christ’s coming. Instead, Paul teaches the coming of Christ using the same language of other Bible authors. How are we to surmise another separate and distinct coming of Christ? Shall we do it Biblically? Or shall we do it Theologically, or traditionally? Or shall we, without clear Scripture, produce it “Dispensationally?”

## QUESTIONS

Paul states that “things to come” (Romans 8:38) cannot separate us from the love of God? To what is Paul referring?

Paul’s desire is that the believer can stand in “*the evil day*” (Ephesians 6:13). The only other reference to “*the evil day*” is found in Amos 6:3. To what day does Paul refer?

*Consideration of Some Initial Objections:*

### **1. The objection is raised that the Body of Christ and Israel are different; therefore they need to have different comings.**

We believe that the answer to the objection of the distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ, prophecy and mystery may well lie in the way that we view Christ’s first coming. The first coming of Christ was prophetic. He came for Israel. Yet the dispensational Bible student is fully aware there was a two-fold purpose of Christ’s coming and subsequent death, burial and resurrection.

One of the purposes was in accordance with prophecy. Christ died for Israel! And yet there was another purpose, a hidden purpose in this great work of Christ upon the Cross, and this mystery was revealed by Paul. Now, was it necessary to have two deaths of Christ to satisfy both prophecy and mystery? Certainly not. God in His great wisdom carried forth a provision for both programs simultaneously (although unknown to man at that time).

We believe that as the first coming of Christ had a twofold purpose, so does the second; and that the second coming of Christ no more needs to be two separate events than did the first. God has a prophetic purpose in the second advent, but He also has a mystery purpose, never revealed to man until Paul.

We do not believe that Prophecy and Mystery are always exclusive terms.

### **2. The objection is raised that Paul uses the word “mystery” in I Corinthians 15:51.**

Just what is the mystery purpose of the second coming? Let us look at the passage and see:

*“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be CHANGED, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be CHANGED” (I Corinthians 15:51-52).*

The mystery was not that Christ would “come” or that there would be a “resurrection.” These teachings are clearly prophetic, as is the timing of “the last trump.” The context says this information is in harmony with prophecy:

*“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN, Death is swallowed up in victory” (:54).*

If the coming, the resurrection and the timing are all prophetic, then what is new in this passage? What is taught here that is a mystery? It is a truth concerning the nature of the resurrection of the Body of Christ. The members of the Body will be CHANGED. We will receive a different KIND of body, not simply a RESTORED one. Is not the TYPE of RESURRECTION BODY the subject of the passage?

*“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also CELESTIAL bodies, and bodies TERRESTRIAL: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. SO ALSO IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body ... As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be CHANGED” (:35-51).*

Israel will be raised to receive a glorified TERRESTRIAL body, equipped to function on the earth. The Body of Christ will be raised to receive a glorified CELESTIAL body, equipped to function in the heavenlies! We must realize that this mystery deals not only with believers which “sleep in Jesus” but with those who “are ALIVE and remain.” This was quite a mystery! Unlike the condition of living believing Israelites at the second coming of Christ, living members of the Body will be changed at the resurrection. The living Israelites will need no change to enter the kingdom, but will go in with their EARTHLY (TERRESTRIAL) bodies. Living saints of the Body of Christ MUST undergo a CHANGE to assume their heavenly function.

*“Behold, I shew you a mystery; WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED” (:51).*

### **3. The objection is set forth that we are not “appointed to wrath.”**

Paul makes it abundantly clear that the believer is not “appointed to wrath.”

*“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 5:9).*

*“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (I Thessalonians 1:10).*

But, we must determine who’s wrath we are delivered from: Are we delivered from the wrath of man, or Satan? Hardly; Paul was beaten, imprisoned and executed by man. Just read Foxe’s Book of Martyrs for further examples of the Body of Christ facing wrath.

The wrath that the believer will NEVER face is the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. This is the wrath of the Day of the Lord, of the Second Advent. The day of the Lord is AFTER the tribulation:

*“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” (Joel 2:31).*

*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24:29).*

*“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:” (Isaiah 2:11-12).*

Deliverance from the circumstances of life is actually contrary to the doctrine that Paul taught. Paul taught endurance and longsuffering.

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