

What Does the First Christmas Teach Us About the End of Days?

Note: This is third of a four-part series about Advent. Click [here](#) for part one and [here](#) for part two.

Jesus used vivid, prophetic and symbolic language to describe His promised future return, which will affect the earth, sun, moon and stars (Matt. 24:29-30). John the Revelator seems to speak of these same cosmic disturbances but adds that every mountain and island will be moved out of its place (Rev. 6:14).

Isaiah says that in the day of the Lord's "fierce anger" the earth will be "moved out of her place," which may imply out of her orbit (Isa. 13:13, JUB). This may explain why Isaiah later says the earth will be "shaken exceedingly" (Isa. 24:19, NKJV) and "reel to and fro like a drunkard" (Isa. 24:20).

In the face of these great cosmic disturbances and ecological catastrophes, men who survive will hide in caves and beg the mountains and rocks to fall on them and "hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:12-16). It is as though they think "the sky is falling on us!" Yet, the Scripture says they will not repent of their deeds nor give God glory (Rev. 16:9,11).

The First Christmas and the End of Days

This current Christmastime Advent series has come out of the context of my own life in recent months, as I studied Scriptures and wrote an article for *Charisma* magazine's December issue. The editorial team requested that I write the cover article about "what the first Christmas can tell us about the end of days."

Since biblical prophecy has always been of interest to me, you may have noticed that many of my blog-posts touch or focus on that category. From the announcement of Christ's first coming to the completion of His Second Coming, Scriptures call on God's chosen-ones to learn to faithfully watch, eagerly wait and diligently work for the Second Coming of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish Messiah and the Gentiles' Savior.

He is coming to resurrect the righteous dead and "catch away" (rapture) the living saints (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Simultaneously, He is also coming to finally judge the wicked in righteous and wrathful vengeance (2 Pet. 3:3-9; Rev. 6:17).

Sounds Like Greek to Me

Four Greek words are used in 35 verses of the New Testament when referring to the second "coming" of Christ. The four terms and their frequency of use are *parousia* (16), *erkomai* (8), *epiphania* (6) and *apokalupsis* (5). The context surrounding the use of each of these words adds perspective to this long-promised, prophetic event of the ages.

I anticipate doing more study and writing on these terms and related teachings in the near future. But, for now, let me summarize the usage of these special words by saying that when speaking of the entire event of the second coming, *parousia* is used and means a physical and continuing presence. When the perspective relates to believers seeing Him "coming" to review and reward our works with promised crowns and blessings, *epiphania* is used and means a bright manifestation or visible "appearance" of His godly glory, yielding happy, affirming joy for believers.

The third Greek word is, perhaps unknowingly, the more familiar because *apokalupsis* means "revelation" and is used when something which was previously unknown or hidden is unveiled, uncovered or revealed. Paul told the Thessalonians that our Lord Jesus will be "revealed (*apokalupsis*) from

heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2 Thess. 1:6-8a). Peter taught that the "proof of our faith" will result in praise and glory and honor "at the *revelation (apokalupsis)* of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7, 13).

The apostle John is known for his prophetic writings in the final book of the New Testament. These profound words are revealed as "the Revelation (*apokalupsis*) of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw" (Rev. 1:1-2).

The final Greek word used for Christ's second "coming" is *erkomai* and is consistently used when the Scripture speaks from the unbelievers' perspective and of their appropriate fear of His judgments, appearance and presence. It is "the opposite side of the coin" from *epiphania*, which is the same event, but from the believers' perspective. One is the future time of feared judgment on the wicked, and the other side is the believer's longed-for "appearance" of our Deliverer from the "wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

The Day of the Lord

The wrath of God will be manifested in the future prophetic-period known in Scripture as the Day of the Lord, which occurs at the end of this age. It is when God's wrath is finally released in the judgment of unbelievers and when Antichrist (the "beast") will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever with the false prophet. They will be joined later by Satan himself, after being chained in the abyss of the bottomless pit during the entire millennium (Rev. 20:7-10).

Scripture describes the Day of the Lord as a time of radical destruction and cosmic redesign, when "the heavens will pass

away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat" (2 Pet. 3:10b, MEV). In view of this dramatic and dark prospect, Peter then asks "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:11b)?

Paul begged and urged the Thessalonians to live a life that is set apart and dedicated to pleasing God. He transparently reminded them that "this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of depravity, even as the Gentiles who do not know God, and that no man take advantage of and defraud his brother in any matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. Therefore, he that despises does not despise man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:3-8, MEV).

How good it is to know that "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance) through the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:10, NKJV).

No wonder Paul then concludes this instruction about the Day of the Lord by saying, "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11). After all, "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (2 Thess. 5:24).

Stay tuned for the final installment, *Avoiding Apostasy in the Last Days*. {eoa}

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