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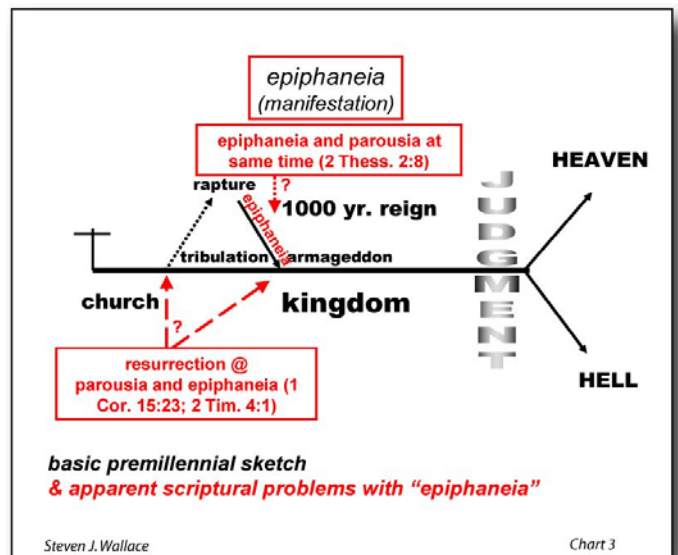
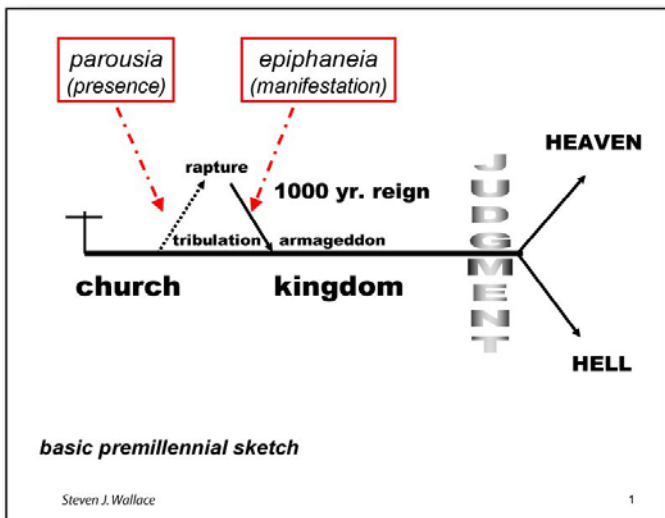
The Presence (parousia); the Manifestation (epiphaneia); the Judgment Seat (bema) of Christ

By: Steven J. Wallace

Pre-millennialists have created a confusing concoction of theological error regarding the second coming of Christ.

the *parousia* and the *epiphaneia* is often termed the “rapture.”

- At the end of the 1000 years, they contend that Jesus will then raise the dead to judge them and send the ungodly to hell and the saved to heaven. Briefly then, Christ first comes for the saints (*parousia*) but is not manifested (*epiphaneia*). After seven years, He is revealed or manifested (*epiphaneia*) to all the living and wins the battle of Armageddon, which ushers in the millennium.



The sketch of their depiction of the end is something like this:

- There will be a *parousia* or coming of the Lord for his saints where Jesus will take away the saints from the earth, and they will reside in His presence for seven years.
- At the same time, there will be a great tribulation on earth, but the saints will be spared because they are in the *parousia* [par-oo-see'-ah] or *presence* of the Lord.
- After the seven years, premillennialists assume that Jesus will then “come with His saints” to judge the living on the earth to fight the great battle of Armageddon. They call this coming His *epiphaneia* [ep-if-an'-i-ah], or “manifestation” which will occur before His 1000 year reign. The period of time between

The *parousia* and *epiphaneia* is an artificial distinction:

- 2 Thessalonians 2:8, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness [Gk. *epiphaneia*] of His coming [Gk. *parousia*].” Both occur at the same time! There is not a second of time between the two.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13, “so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming [Gk. *parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” Premillennialists contend that Jesus



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is coming “for His saints,” i.e., to take them away in the rapture at the *parousia*. He should not be coming “with all the saints at the *parousia* according to premillennialists.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 15 shows that the dead in Christ will precede the living (thus a resurrection) at the Lord’s coming (*parousia*). But Premillennialists contend that at the *parousia* is where Jesus is coming to get the saints, not bring them with him...further, the theory needs multiple resurrections: at the *parousia*, at the *epiphaneia*, and then another at the end of the 1000 year reign. The Bible, however only speaks of “ONE” resurrection where simultaneously the good and evil are raised (see Jn. 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15)

Judgment Seat

Like the number of comings of the Lord, the judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ is reduced to all kinds of fantastic speculation and human reasoning. W. E. Vine allows his premillennial conjecture to taint his scholarship:

“At this bema believers are to be made manifest...There they will receive rewards for their faithfulness to the Lord...This judgment-seat is to be distinguished from the pre-millennial, earthly throne of Christ, Matt. 25:31, and the post-millennial ‘Great White Throne’ Rev. 20:11, at which only ‘the dead’ will appear. The judgment-seat of Christ will be a tribunal held ‘in His Parousia,’ i.e., His presence with His saints after His return to receive them to Himself.”¹ [1]

The judgment at the “throne” (*thronos*) occurs the same time with the (*bema*).

- The judgment-seat will be used for the dead. W. E. Vine seeks to limit the *bema* to certain individuals but Paul connects it to the “living and the dead” (Rom. 14:8-10).
- The judgment seat (*bema*) will be used in the universal judgment (Rom. 14:10-12, note: “every knee,” “every tongue” “each

of us.”) Likewise the judgment throne (*thronos*) is universal and over all nations. Contrary to W. E. Vine, there is no distinction of the subjects or of the timing of these events.

“When [timing, sjw] the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then [timing, sjw] He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations [subjects, sjw] will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another [judgment of the righteous and wicked, sjw], as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:31, 32).

The judgment of the good and evil occur at the same time as 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 teaches. Note what occurs:

- Jesus will repay tribulation to the wicked (v. 6)
- Jesus will repay rest to the troubled, i.e., the faithful (v. 7)
- Jesus will take vengeance on those who refuse the knowledge of God and reject the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 8)
- These disobedient ones will be banished from His presence with everlasting destruction (v. 9)
- *When will these things be?*
 - Both, the reward of the righteous, and the banishment of the wicked occur together, viz., “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven” (v. 7); “that day” (v. 10) he comes to be glorified in His saints.
 - Premillennialists contradict, contending that the saints will be praising Jesus when they are in the rapture and that the wicked will be punished later. Paul places

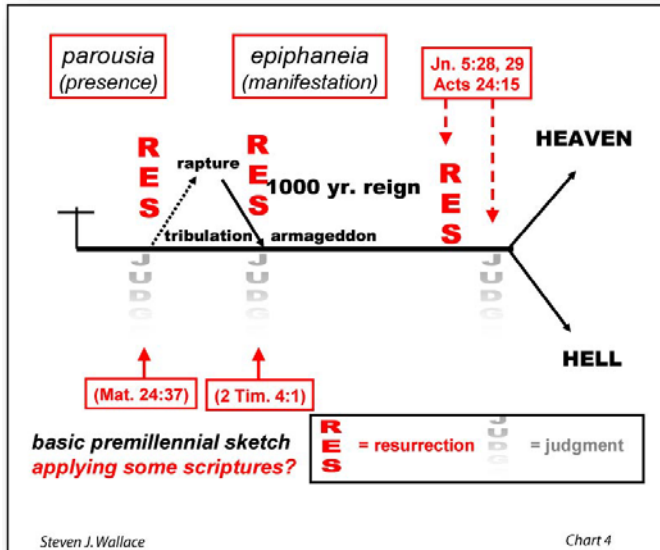


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the two events together. Either the punishment of the wicked must come 1000 years too early, or the rapture must be changed to after the 1000 year reign. Either way, absurdity, confusion, and contradiction exist!

reward each according to his works” (Matt. 16:27).

- “Then” answers “when” judgment will be—at the Lord’s return. It is “then” that he will “reward each according to his works.”
- The end of the world is at the *parousia*, “looking for and hastening the coming [parousia] of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” (2 Pet. 3:12). Charts 2-5 show the confusion that exists when we take Premillennial definitions and plug in scripture accordingly. What the Scriptures teach regarding the “coming of our Lord” gives no room for a rapture or multiple comings, and resurrections!



The judgment of the living and the dead occurs at the *epiphaneia* and *parousia*:

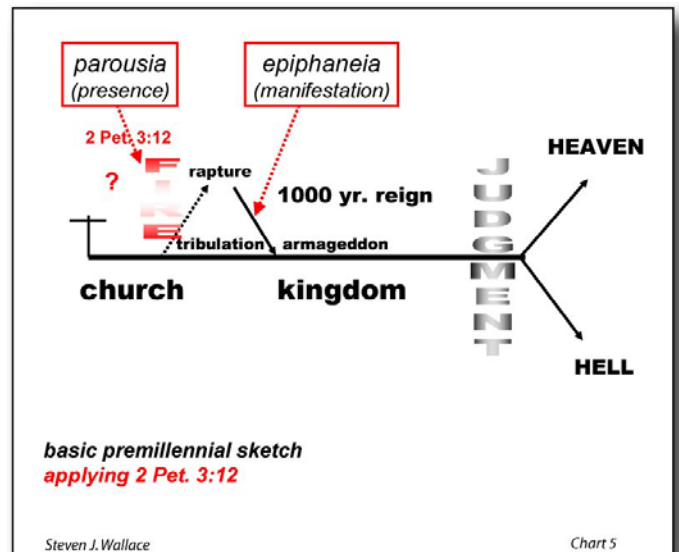
- The judgment and resurrection occur at the *epiphaneia*, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing (*epiphaneia*) and His kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1).

Premillennialists have to contend that some of the dead will be judged, but Paul says “the living and the dead” without qualification.

- The judgment and the resurrection occur at the *parousia*, “resurrection” see 1 Corinthians 15:21, 23 (*coming*, v. 23 is *parousia*); “judgment” see Matt. 24:37-39 (*coming*, vv. 37, 39 is *parousia*)

The return of Christ is the time of judgment:

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will

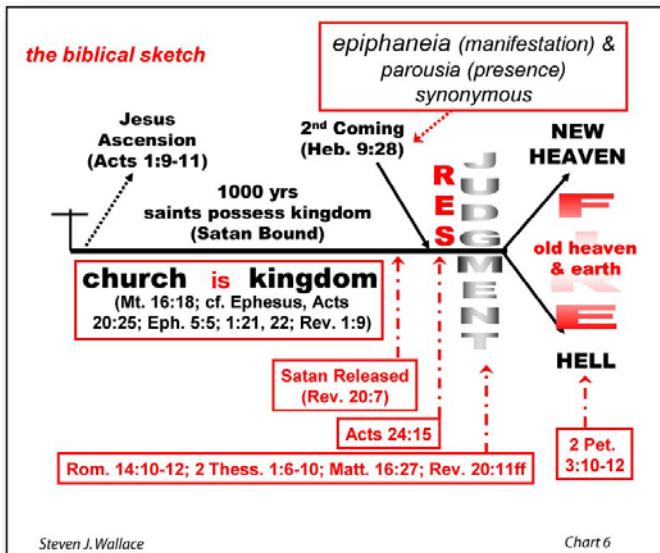


The proper perspective of the judgment with the *parousia* and *epiphaneia* of Christ is clearly shown in the Scriptures. If we allow the Scripture alone to be the teacher, then the confusion fades away. Chart 6 is a clear and scriptural portrayal of such



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events.



- We see from the Scriptures that Jesus died and rose again and 40 days later ascended into the heavens (Acts 1:9-11).
- When Jesus ascended to the heavens, He sent down the Holy Spirit 10 days later on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). This marked the beginning of the Lord's church and kingdom. For such came with great power (cf. Mk 9:1).
- The church/kingdom is one and the same institution. Jesus promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18). Yet years later, while at Ephesus, Paul had preached the kingdom resulting in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:25; Eph. 5:5). In preaching the kingdom, he preached the church as the book of Ephesians speaks exclusively about. Years later and near the end of the dispensing of God's house rules through the apostles, John penned a letter to the seven churches of Asia. One such church was Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7). He told the brethren there, "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. . ." (Rev. 1:9). Was John a brother and companion in tribulation with these churches? Was he a brother and companion with the Ephesians in the

kingdom? He explicitly affirms that he was! He was as much a fellow companion in tribulation with these brethren as he was in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

- After this is mentioned a symbolic 1000 year, reign exists where the saints possess the kingdom, and Satan is bound. However, at a particular time Satan will be released for a little time (Rev. 20:7). Of all that will be involved in this Satanic rebellion nothing concrete is mentioned and men only fancy themselves with imaginary suggestions as to what will be going on. We can only state for certain that his release parallels the hardships that he posed upon the Saints under Roman rule. When it looks dire, at a time which only the Father knows, His Son will come back a second time (Heb. 9:28). (Please also note, that the scriptures only speak of a "second" coming. They do not speak of a "third" or "fourth" coming.)
- The enemies of God will be destroyed, the dead will be raised and everyone will be judged. Jesus' *presence* and *manifestation* will be one and the same event and "every eye" shall see him (Rev. 1:7). The physical world and universe will at this time pass away and the wicked will inherit hell while the righteous will realize heaven! This is the true biblical picture of eschatology.

²[1] *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 2, pp. 282, 283.