

Uses of *Parousia* versus *Erchomai* by the Fathers

Erchomai is used very infrequently by the Fathers (only six citations) to represent “coming or advent.” Of these, two refer to John the Baptist asking Jesus if he is the Messiah in Matthew 11; one exegetes the phrase “thy kingdom come” from the Lord’s Prayer; and the other three address the phrase “coming to judge the quick and the dead” in the Creeds.¹ In contrast, *epiphaneia*, is used five different ways by the Fathers, including both Jesus’ first and second comings. The citations regarding the Second Coming are seventeen in number and break down into six categories: (1) In general; (2) In prophecy; (3) Contrasted to the First Coming, with special reference to the Feast of Christ’s Baptism; (4) As inspiring fear; (5) Be prepared by practice of virtue; and (6) In reference to millenarianism of followers.² *Phaneroo* is also used by the Fathers, but again in a very limited way eschatologically (by Clement in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 50.3 and *Shepherd of Hermas* 4.2.2—both referring to the Church.)³

Parousia, on the other hand, has voluminous uses by the Fathers. It is used to communicate: (1) Presence in general, seven times; (2) The universal presence of *Logos*, six times; (3) Presence of the Holy Ghost, three times; (4) Arrival, appearance, personal visit or advent in general, nine times; (5) Of entry into corporeal life of pre-existent souls, three times; (6) Of Jesus’ First Advent (Incarnation), twenty-five times; (7) As a coming judgment by Chrysostom in his *Homily 28.1 in John*; (8) In both the first and second advents, five times; (9) In the future (second) advent, twenty-five times; and (10) The advent of Christ’s kingdom,

¹Lampe, 2:550.

²Lampe, 2:538-9.

³G. W. H. Lampe, ed. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, vol. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1470.

foretold by the prophets, one time; (11) Of the advent of the Holy Ghost, four times; and (12) Of the advent of antichrist, one time.⁴ Of the citations dealing with the “future advent of Christ,” some seem to deal with the Rapture, some seem to deal with the Second Coming, and some could be either/or.

From these many varied uses of *parousia* by the Fathers it is clear that it was not a term specifically reserved for use in conjunction with the Rapture, as Paul chose to use it. It appears to be an all inclusive term to represent all the events surrounding the Second Coming (Advent) of the Lord Jesus Christ (including the Rapture of the Church). This was also the conclusion of both James F. Stitzinger, in his article, “The Rapture in Twenty Centuries of Biblical Interpretation” and Gerald B. Stanton, in his book, *Kept From the Hour*.⁵ Now, onto the direct references to the Rapture of the Church by the Fathers.

⁴G. W. H. Lampe, ed. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, vol. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1043-4.

⁵Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From the Hour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956); quoted in James F. Stitzinger, “The Rapture in Twenty Centuries of Biblical Interpretation” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 13 (2002), 151, n. 10.