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Market Street Fellowship
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The Appearing of the Lord Pt. 1

As most of you know, JW Luman was here this weekend sharing on the topic "The Appearing of the Lord". Since the Lord has already captured the attention of many of our hearts right there on that topic, I thought it would be good for us as a body to just stay parked here for a week or two or three rather than moving back into our Ephesians study.

So today, I'd like to share for a little while on the reality of His appearing. And...just so you know, this Ephesians study will probably always be like this. It will be the track that we run on so long as I don't feel the Lord leading me to focus on something else. But whenever I feel it is appropriate for our body, I'll temporarily put it away until I feel we've explored whatever the Lord wanted us to see somewhere else. In simpler terms, I'll be starting and stopping the Ephesians study for the next 10 years.

Ok, the appearing of the Lord. What a wonderful reality. What an overwhelming reality. The appearing of the Lord is nothing other than the soul's encounter with God in the person of Jesus Christ.

What I'd like to do, however long it takes, is look specifically at the three "appearings" of the Lord mentioned in Hebrews chapter 9. That will be where we focus our attention. And to do that, we will be all over the Old Testament showing these appearings to be the fulfillment and reality of all that was promised. But before we do that, let's just examine this word "appearing".

First of all, JW mentioned that there are seven different Greek words that are brought over into English as our one word - "appearing". Now, technically, a couple of those are modifications of the same Greek word, but it's true that still each of them carries a unique meaning or a unique emphasis. For those of you who may not be aware, the New Testament was written in Greek. And what I'm saying here is that there are several different Greek words, each with their own unique meaning, that English translators (particularly of the King James and New King James versions) translate as the English word "appear" or "appearing".

This should strike you as a bit odd. How can several different words all have their meaning and reality expressed in a single English word? Well, that's a good question. They cannot. And yet, as we have seen and will see, all of these words do share something in common. They all involve something coming into view, into Light, into comprehension, into experience. They all involve something that was not known, seen, understood, experienced somehow coming to be so.

And so it's not a crime to translate them all as the English word "appear", but you just have to realize that our comprehension of that English word doesn't contain or capture the reality of all of these words. More than that, our understanding of the

English word "appear" could never contain the **experience and reality** of what each of these Greek words describe.

Now, generally when we think of the word "appear" in English we immediately think of natural sight and natural light. The sun appeared from behind the clouds. The car appeared suddenly out from my blind spot. That word in English really has **one** definition and **one** reality – both of which have to do with natural sight and natural things. And that is part of why that word cannot contain or capture the reality of the appearances mentioned in Scripture.

Of course I am not questioning the reality of Christ's physical appearing in the flesh. That should go without saying. Christ obviously lived in the flesh for roughly 33 years. And there are also physical appearances of His judgments in the earth spoken of in the Bible. Yes, yes. Of course. And yet, these things seen with the natural eye constitute very little of the "appearings" mentioned in your Bible. Maybe a better way to say that would be this – any physical appearing that somebody might behold with the natural eye will not bring you to the reality and true beholding of His appearing as mentioned in your Bible. Hang with me here, this will become more plain shortly.

Peter, for instance, walked with Jesus for several years. He saw Him with his natural eye. He witnessed miracles and signs. He even walked on water for a while with Jesus. And yet one day there was a true appearing, an unveiling, a seeing of the Son of God in his soul and He said "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" – to which Jesus quickly replied "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father has revealed it". You could say it this way - "Peter, seeing me in flesh and blood has not caused you to know me this way. There needed to be another kind of appearing, another kind of beholding, before you could ever know who I am. I needed to appear to your soul in spirit and truth as only the Father makes possible".

And again, Jesus says to the Jews who are looking right at Him in the flesh with their natural eyes "no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*." Mat 11:27 I can almost hear them arguing "if you say you are the Son, then we know you because you're standing in front of us". Jesus would say "no, I have not yet appeared to you". They might say "we've known you since you were a boy". Jesus would say "and yet I have never been seen by you". Or the Jews could say (and did say) "we know the Father because we're the natural seed of Abraham and we've had the writings of Moses for hundreds of years". Jesus would say "no, you have not yet seen Him".

What am I saying? I am saying that even though there can be, and there were, appearances of Christ in the natural realm, these are not the appearances that cause you to know anything spiritual. **If you are going to know spiritual reality, and live in and by spiritual reality, He must appear in and as spirit and life.** Jesus says "the words I speak to you are spirit and they are life". Yes, Jesus might say "my words are far more than lessons. They are the seeing of Me, for those who have eyes to see."

And I'm not talking about dreams and visions here. I'm talking about the soul's face to face encounter with the Person of Truth as the Spirit reveals Him. To use some Old Testament types and shadows – I'm talking about the glory appearing in His temple, which temple you are. I'm talking about the cloud appearing in the

tabernacle, which tabernacle you are. I'm talking about the King appearing on His throne, which is established in your heart out from which flows rivers of living water. **I'm talking about Him appearing to you where He is, as He is, unto your ever fuller apprehension of Him, and the necessary and unstoppable confrontation and transformation that that brings.**

I remember the day that it began to dawn on me that nothing I had ever seen with my natural eyes had ever really transformed my soul. Nothing that appears to the eyes of the flesh has the power to put away or change the flesh. Now, I could see a terrible car wreck and be depressed for a few days. I could see a rainbow and smile for a few minutes. I could see someone healed of cancer and rejoice for almost a week. Perhaps I could even see a vision of Jesus with my natural eyes. That might blow my socks off! That might excite me beyond words, and if I told the story enough times might give me a new platform for ministry, and sell my new book. But it would NOT change my soul.

Natural appearances can only bring natural and temporary results. Just think of the Jews of the first century, and all they witnessed with their eyes as they followed Jesus Christ from town to town. Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, had much to write about both Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. Josephus writes that the man called Jesus was able to perform cures for every type of illness and disease by simply speaking a word. Josephus writes that His righteousness and wisdom caused the Pharisees and Sadducees to burn with jealousy, and that is the reason for their mock trial and execution. Josephus even writes that many believed that the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by God for what the Jews did to this righteous man Jesus. And yet, Josephus never became a Christian. From all that we know, Josephus died a Jew.

But that shouldn't surprise us because it was the same with his disciples. Jesus amazed them. Jesus baffled them. Jesus shattered all their paradigms and spoke wisdom hidden from the foundation of the world. But then He looks them in the eye and says "it is better that I go away in this form, in the flesh, that the Spirit may live in you". Jesus knew that his appearing in the flesh had not changed a single man. Sure it changed the skin of the lepers and the torment of the demoniacs, but He hadn't changed a soul until He began to appear in the ones who received Him as their very life.

It was the exact same thing with those who came out of Egypt through the Red Sea. What they saw with their natural eyes can hardly be imagined by most humans. An ocean parted, a daily pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, mountains shaken, lightening flashing, the thunderous audible voice of God. And yet all of these natural appearances profited them nothing, because it brought very few of them to the true inward appearing of the Lord. In the words of Hebrews:

Heb 4:2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

Think about the Apostle Paul for a moment. Paul was shaken to the core when the Lord appeared to Him outwardly as he traveled to Damascus. Paul was converted. Paul became a believer. Paul instantly knew he had been wrong. But that is not the

appearing that transformed Paul's soul. Nor is it the appearing, or the kind of appearing, that Paul ever speaks of in his letters.

Granted, that outward appearing on the road to Damascus was an appearing that began to transform his belief system, but it did not transform His soul. How do I know that? Because every single thing He wrote in your New Testament has nothing to do with an outward appearing in visions perceived by natural eyes, but rather the inward appearing that opens the eyes of His heart.

In fact, to the best of my memory, Paul never even mentions the outward appearing on the road to Damascus. Luke mentions it three times in the book of Acts. But Paul leaves it alone. It was obviously a major turning point in Paul's life, but it was not the heart of His gospel. It was not the true beholding of the Lord. The heart of His gospel was the appearing, the revealing, the seeing, the knowing, the comprehending, of the Lord who dwells within as the life of the believer...and then of course the subsequent and necessary transformation of the soul that happens in that appearing.

Just look at his letters. Look at what he prays for the church. Does he ever pray that they would have an outward vision of Jesus? Does he ever pray that they would be knocked to the ground with a blinding light as he was? Does he pray for them to see a lot of miracles? I realize that Paul not only believed in miracles and visions, he also experienced them. But look at his prayers. Are not nearly every one of His prayers concerned exclusively with the soul's knowing, seeing, comprehending, realizing, awakening to the reality of new life in Christ? You know they are.

[Eph 1:17-18](#) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

[Eph 3:14-19](#) For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, (17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— (19) to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[Col 1:9](#) Because of this, we also, from the day in which we heard, do not cease praying for you, and asking that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 to your walking worthily of the Lord to all pleasing, in every good work being fruitful, and increasing to the knowledge of God,

[Phi 1:8](#) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in true knowledge and all discernment,

It is with this kind of appearing, this kind of knowing, revealing, exhibiting, and realizing that the letters of Paul are concerned. Romans – coming to "know yourself

baptized into His death, buried with Him and raised with Him". 1st Corinthians – do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Has he not yet appeared to you in this way? 2nd Corinthians – are you coming to see the glory of God in a mirror, as the very life of your soul, and being transformed into the same image from glory to glory? Galatians – are you coming to realize that you have been crucified with Christ and that now He is the life of your soul? Ephesians – are you coming to comprehend the reality of being made alive together, raised together, seated together with Christ in heavenly places?

A cursory glance at a number of New Testament scriptures makes this evident. Look, for instance, at Colossians chapter 3 verse 4

Col 3:4 Whenever Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Here the Greek word Phaneroo is translated "appear" in the KJV and NKJV. It is translated "revealed" in the NASB, which may be better. Regardless of whatever way it comes over into English, the very context of the passage demands that this cannot be anything having to do with physical sight. This is not an eschatological passage, regardless of your views of eschatology. How can I be so sure? Simply look at the context.

In Colossians 1:1 Paul tells us the reality of where we have been seated. He says we are raised with Christ in His resurrection and seated above with Him at the right hand of God. Then, in verse 2, he admonishes believers to set their mind, fix their gaze, on the things above where they have been raised up, not on things on the earth, Vs. 3 Why? Because you have died, and your life is truly hidden with Christ in God. Vs. 4. Therefore whenever (and that is the Greek word there – not "when" but "whenever" or "as often as") Christ your life appears, is revealed, is seen, is manifestly known by your soul, is uncovered by the working of the Spirit, then you are known to be, then you appear with Him together (*sun* – a Greek word for union) with Him in glory.

Do you see that this isn't an event? Do you see that this isn't something that happens with the natural eyes. Its cannot be known by natural perception any more than anything in this chapter can be known by natural perception – namely that they have been raised up with Christ, are seated above, are dead to the earth, etc. Is that what natural sight sees? Or is that what the Spirit of God reveals in Christ's appearing.

If you were to read on down in verses 9 and 10 you would see Paul going to talk about the result of this appearing. Vs. 9 the putting off of the old man together with his deeds and putting on the new who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. Is this a renewal and conformity that has to do with natural perception? Is this a transformation that has to do with eyeballs seeing something tangible? Of course not. This appearing is the appearing of the substance of spiritual reality to the soul of man. **This is a soul's encounter with the brightness of the Spirit of Truth.** And this appearing works in you. It works in you to conform you to the image of what has appeared. Or in Paul's words, it conforms you to the image of Who created you anew in Christ Jesus.

So, my point here, just by way of introduction, is that there is far more to the appearing of the Lord than that which natural eyeballs can experience. Most of you

realize that already, but maybe you've never connected it to this New Testament word translated "appearing". Regardless of what our eschatological views are – what we may think we understand about end times events – or what our views are regarding dreams and visions, I can promise you one thing. If we are waiting for a natural appearing to the physical eyeball to change the nature of our soul into His image, then we are waiting on the wrong kind of appearing. What you see with your eyeballs can excite your soul, surprise your soul, or terrify your soul, but it will never transform your soul.

And this is exactly what we're going to see in Hebrews chapter 9. But before we get into this...I'd like to just plead with you for a moment. I'd like to plead with you not to exchange the truth and reality of salvation for some doctrine or concept that has become important to you or exciting to you. God doesn't care about your doctrines. He doesn't care about my doctrines. God cares about you knowing His Son who is the Truth and being conformed to His image. And only in that is truth really known.

So much of the time our doctrines and theologies act as a hard shell that guard our hearts from receiving His Word. So often His Word is not able to penetrate the thick wall of our "doctrinal stance" in order to reach our heart. For heavens sake...let everything go until its been given to you in the face of Jesus Christ. Its not like you'll ever lose anything worth keeping.

Ok, that's my introduction to the appearing of the Lord. Now, we're just going to have a bit of time to look at our verses in Hebrews and we'll pick it up next week. Here are the three verses that we're going to consider. Hebrews 9:26, 28, and 24. And we're going to do them in that order. I realize that's not the order that they are presented in the book of Hebrews. But I want to do them in that order.

Let me just read them now with a few comments and literal translations and that will be all we have time for today.

Heb 9:26 ... but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Some of your Bible's read "once, at the end of the age", some read "once at the end of the world". The Greek word there is *aion* meaning age, and it has to do with the Old Covenant age. It is distinct from the Greek word *kosmos*, meaning world. It does not involve the blowing up of the planet. Although to those who have seen Christ as the end spoken of here, it might as well have included the blowing up of the planet, because that entire realm becomes dead to you. I'll leave that alone for now, but that is one of the inward effects of this appearing. We'll talk more about that. I just wanted to say right now that the word here is age, and it says here that He appeared at the end of the age to become the end of it. He became the end of it in Himself, and put it away. He didn't just hold up a stop sign to it. He appeared to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. It died to God when Christ died. God was done that age and all that was summed up in it – the old man, the old creation, the old covenant.

Also, in this first passage, note that the word "sin" is not plural. Christ's death did not just put away sins. It put away sin. Sin is not just bad things that are done, sin is everything that misses the mark, everything that falls short of the glory of God. Christ appeared once, at the end of the age, to put away that which fell short, that which missed the mark. And He did that in order that He could become, in His

resurrection, that which did not fall short. He did that so that we could bear that end with Him, and be found in Him dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. So Christ did not appear at the end of the age to put away sins. If He simply put away sins, He'd have to come repeatedly and keep putting them away. No, He put away sin. More about that later. I'm just introducing these sentences and their respective appearings this week. Next week we'll begin to dissect them in more detail, and talk about how this works in the soul of the believer.

Lastly, I will tell you that in each of these verses – 24, 26, and 28, the word translated appear in each one are three completely different Greek words. Same English word "appear". Different Greek word. Some commentators make a big deal about this, and I think it is significant.

But just for now, this word appear here is the Greek word Phaneroo (pronounced phaner-oh) and has to do with something made manifest or rendered apparent.

Our second verse:

Heb 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly look for Him He will appear a second (out of second), apart from sin, for salvation.

A few brief comments on this verse. First of all, this verse (in fact, these three chapters) involves a contrast between the high priest of the Old Covenant and the High Priest that Christ is. The high priest of old had to enter into the holy place once every year bearing the sins of many. Putting away, through death, all of the trespasses, both done knowingly and unknowingly, for that entire year. And then he would appear, having gone into the presence of God with the blood of bulls and goats, he would appear again to those looking for him. He would appear again, apart from sin, now separated from sin, now entirely removed from the sin of Israel from that previous year that He carried and put away in the death of the lamb. The high priest would appear again unto Israel as the one by whom and in whom they had been accepted of God. He would appear again, a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.

And obviously, this is Christ we're talking about here, and this is what this verse is the fulfillment of. He appears once to put away sin. He appears again, having put away sin, now "apart from sin", unto the salvation of all who look, or expectantly wait, to see him.

A few things to note about translation here. The KJV says "to those who look for him". Some translations read "eagerly wait". Both are good. But it is not a looking way off into the future...thousands of years from the putting away of sin. Can you imagine how ludicrous it would have seemed to the recipients of this letter if the writer said "what I really meant is that he will appear again to those who are looking for him with their natural eyes in the sky in over 2000 years from now". The reason I say this is that most commentators, though thankfully not all, try to make this verse have to do with the a bodily return of Christ in the future. But that is not the context of text, nor is it even remotely related to the fulfillment of high priest. No, this isn't a waiting for something long in its coming...which, in fact, has not even yet happened. If that is the understanding of this verse, then it has had no relevance or reality to any human being that has lived since this letter was written. No, this is a looking, an expectant gaze, seeking the appearing of the one who has put away sin and who is now appearing as the salvation of those who see Him as the second.

And that brings me to another translation note. The word "time" in the phrase "the second time" is not in the original Greek. It is added and should be in italics in your Bible. If it is not, it still should be. It reads, quite literally in the Greek "He shall appear out from the second". I know that's difficult English, but its good theology. The entire book of Hebrews is the contrast between the first and the second. The first tabernacle, the second tabernacle. The first covenant, the second covenant. The first man, the second man. The first house, the second house. The first priesthood, the second priesthood. The first creation, the new creation. The first mountain – Sinai, the second mountain – Zion. And when Christ has appeared once to put away the first, He then appears coming out from and as the second to all who will look for Him.

And this Greek word "appear" has to do with "allowing oneself to be seen".

I'm just trying to set us up for next week here with something of an introduction today.

Our last verse, vs. 24

Heb 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Very quickly...although this is the one that has most captured my heart...here we have Christ appearing for us in the presence of God. We'll spend some time on this because its fantastic. But let me just note today that the word "for" here does NOT mean "instead of". It means "on behalf of", or "in representation of". Here we have Christ appearing before His Father as the all and all of those who live in and by Him. It's a head appearing on behalf of a body. Not separate from the body, not without the body, not instead of the body, but on behalf of the body. Here we have Christ, the firstborn of many brethren appearing as the covering, the salvation, the life, the righteousness of all who have died with Him and now live in and by His life. Here we have Christ, bringing a people in Himself, back to His Father.

Joh 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me

And where does that come to be a reality? In the resurrection, of which Jesus says "I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you". Here is Jesus bringing us back to the glory He left behind, clothed in Him, covered in Him, filled with Him, presenting Himself on our behalf in the presence of God as the fulfillment of the High Priest.

In other words, it's the exact same thing as Paul says in Colossians 3. You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Here we have the one Son, returning to the glory of His Father, now joined in union to a people that He presents before the Father as His very own body, His very own increase, His very own glory.

We'll break it down more next week. But let me just conclude with this. My goal in saying any of this has nothing to do with you gaining a theological understanding of these appearances. My goal is that you would come to have Christ appear to you in each of these ways, and thereby bear the reality and experience of it in your very soul.

My goal is that His appearing would become in you the putting away, the taking away of all that has fallen short – the putting away of sin, and not just sins. My goal is that His appearing would be to you, in you, the very reality and substance of salvation. My goal is that His appearing before the Father for you would be the very reality of where and who you understand yourself to be. Please don't let Greek definitions and word clarification distract you from the reality that this is either going to be a true work of the spirit in your soul, or it is a waste of time. Amen.