

5.2 SIS Vol. II, Study V: The Ten Lines of Evidence

SIS VOL. II, STUDY V, TABLE OF CONTENTS HEADING (PP. 103–172)

“Harmony of the Manner of Our Lord’s Second Advent with Other Features of the Divine Plan. How and When the Church Will See Him. How and When the Glory of the Lord Will Be So Revealed That All Flesh Shall See It Together. Statements Apparently Conflicting Shown to Be Harmonious. He Comes ‘As a Thief’ — Not with Outward Show; and Yet ‘With a Shout’ — With ‘Voices’ — and ‘With the Sound of the Great Trumpet.’ ‘He Shall Be Revealed in Flaming Fire, Taking Vengeance,’ and Yet, ‘He Shall So Come, in Like Manner,’ as He Went Away.”

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V — Chapter Overview • pp. 103–172 — 1889 / 1916 edition; the entire chapter is Russell’s systematic treatment of the manner of the return

SIS Vol. II, Study V — Table of Contents Sub-heading • p. 103 — Russell names all ten topics addressed; this document follows that structure

Argument 1: Logical Impossibility (Acts 9:3–4; Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16)

BR. RUSSELL — STUDY V, P. 103

“If the light from the glorious spirit body of Christ would appear to the physical eyes of mankind, they would be instantly blinded, as was Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus; but if they should see that body itself, they would instantly drop dead, as no human can see God and/or Christ and live.”

ACTS 9:3–4 (NASB2020)

“As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”

Paul was blinded by a partial manifestation of Christ’s glory. The full divine nature, dwelling in ‘unapproachable light’ (1 Timothy 6:16), would be fatal to any human observer. The invisibility of the return is therefore physically necessary.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • p. 103 — Opening logical argument; impossibility of a physically visible return

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 103–104 — Acts 9:3–4; Ex. 33:20; 1 Tim. 6:16 all cited and expounded

ZWT, February 1881 • Reprints p. 3 — Christ raised a spirit being; spirit nature dwells in ‘unapproachable light’

SIS Vol. II, Study IV • pp. 154–156 — Parousia as presence of a spirit being, not a physical body

Argument 2: Direct Statement — John 14:19

JOHN 14:19 (NASB2020)

“After a little while, the world no longer is going to see Me; but you are going to see Me; because I live, you also will live.”

Christ’s own statement: the world sees Him no more — permanently. The Church sees Him when changed to His likeness at the first resurrection (1 John 3:2). Two classes: those who see (the glorified Church, as spirit beings) and those who do not (the world, natural human beings).

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 107–109 — *John 14:19 as a direct, absolute, governing statement*

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 107–108 — *Two-class distinction: Church sees at glorification; world never sees (1 John 3:2)*

SIS Vol. VI, The New Creation • p. 72 — *Church sees Christ at glorification when changed to spirit beings*

Argument 3: As a Thief in the Night — 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–5 (NASB2020)

“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night ... But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day.”

Two classes: the world (in darkness, overtaken like a thief) and the watching saints (in the light, not overtaken). A literally visible return collapses this distinction — everyone would be aware of it. Therefore the return is invisible: the world is unaware; the saints discern it by faith.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 109–112 — *Thief-in-the-night argument; 1 Thess. 5:1–6; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15*

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 110–111 — *Two-class structure proving invisible return; visible return collapses the distinction*

ZWT, October–November 1881 • Reprints p. 3 — *‘The Bridegroom came in the Autumn of 1874’ — the thief-like, unannounced manner confirmed*

Argument 4: Kingdom Without Observation — Luke 17:20–21

LUKE 17:20–21 (NASB2020)

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs that can be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

The Kingdom — Christ and His Body — cannot be pointed to. They are spirit beings, invisible to natural sight. The Kingdom is already present among mankind, unrecognized — exactly the character of the parousia.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 112–114 — *Kingdom without observation — Luke 17:20–21; parathesis = outward display*

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 113–114 — *Luke 17:26–30 introduced as reinforcing evidence; days of Noah / Lot*

SIS Vol. III, Thy Kingdom Come • pp. 126–127 — *The Kingdom’s invisible, spirit character established; cannot be pointed to*

Argument 5: The Days of Noah — Matthew 24:37–41

MATTHEW 24:37–39 (NASB2020)

“For the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood ... they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man be.”

The world’s complete unawareness during Noah’s day parallels their unawareness of Christ’s parousia. If the return were visible, the parallel would be impossible. Matthew 24:40–41 (one taken, one left) = the harvest separation happening invisibly during the parousia period.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 114–117 — Days of Noah — Matt. 24:37–41; parousia as an extended period

SIS Vol. II, Study V • p. 115 — Parousia = period (not a moment); world’s unawareness requires invisibility

SIS Vol. II, Study V • p. 116 — Matt. 24:40–41 — one taken, one left = harvest separation during the parousia

SIS Vol. III, Thy Kingdom Come • pp. 150–153 — Harvest typology; the separation of wheat and tares during the parousia period

Argument 6: As the Lightning/Sunlight — Matthew 24:27

MATTHEW 24:27 (NASB2020)

“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man be.”

The Greek word astrape = ‘bright shining’ or sunlight (not lightning — lightning does not characteristically travel east to west; sunlight always does). Christ is the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2). His presence is manifested by truth shining progressively from east to west across the world.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 117–120 — Astrape = bright shining / sunlight, not lightning — Matt. 24:27

SIS Vol. II, Study V • p. 118 — Luke 11:36 cited to confirm astrape = rays of light, not lightning

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 119–120 — Christ as Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2); truth shining east to west

SIS Vol. III, Thy Kingdom Come • pp. 154–157 — Sign of the Son of Man = progressive dawning of present truth; not a visible spectacle

MALACHI 4:2 (NASB2020)

“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and frolic like calves from the stall.”

Argument 7: Every Eye Shall See Him — Revelation 1:7

REVELATION 1:7 (NASB2020)

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.”

Interpretation Principles:

- 1.) Clear literal texts govern symbolic texts
- 2.) All Scripture must harmonize

Principle 1 Application: clear literal texts (1 Timothy 6:16; John 14:19) govern symbolic texts Revelation 1:7, which opens by declaring it communicates ‘in signs’). ‘Every eye will see Him’ = mental sight, understanding, recognition — not physical sight. The Jews who pierced Him will ‘see’ Him in this sense (Zechariah 12:10) — their national recognition of Christ as Messiah during the Time of Trouble.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 120–126 — ‘Every eye shall see’ — Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10; mental vs. physical sight

SIS Vol. II, Study V • p. 121 — Literal texts (1 Tim. 6:16; John 14:19) govern symbolic texts (Rev. 1:7)

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 122–124 — Heb. 2:9 — ‘We see Jesus’ as mental/spiritual sight; the model for parousia seeing-language

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 124–125 — Zech. 12:10 — Israel’s national recognition of Christ during the Time of Trouble

Revelation 1:1 — The book communicates ‘in signs’ (semaino) — authorizing symbolic reading of Rev. 1:7

Argument 8: In Like Manner — Acts 1:9–11

ACTS 1:9–11 (NASB2020)

“After He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up out of their sight ... ‘This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”

This passage compares the ‘manner’ of going to the manner of coming again — not the visibility of going to the visibility of coming. He went quietly, unannounced to the world, departing into a cloud. He returns in the same manner: quietly, invisibly, unannounced to the world.

Primary Sources:

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 126–131 — ‘In like manner’ — Acts 1:9–11; manner of going compared to manner of coming

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 127–128 — Four specific parallels between His going and His coming carefully extracted

SIS Vol. II, Study V • pp. 129–131 — He went quietly, unannounced to the world; He returns in the same manner

Argument 9: Paul’s Logical Argument — 2 Thessalonians 2:1–9

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1–3 (NASB2020)

“Now we request you, brothers and sisters, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed ... to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. No one is to deceive you in any way!”

The Thessalonians were deceived into thinking the Lord had already come — without seeing anything spectacular. This is only possible if they expected an invisible return. Paul corrects them not by saying ‘you didn’t see Him,’ but by pointing to unfulfilled prophetic signs. His argument presupposes the invisible character of the return.

Primary Sources:

- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 131–138 — *Paul’s logical argument — 2 Thess. 2:1–9*
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 132–133 — *Thessalonians could only be deceived without seeing Him if they expected invisible return*
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 135–138 — *Epiphaneia of the parousia (2 Thess. 2:8) — both terms in one verse*

Argument 10: Apparently Conflicting Passages — Harmonized

Br. Russell’s final argument resolves four passages that appear to demand a literal, visible, audible return:

- (a) ‘With a Shout’ (1 Thess. 4:16) — the authoritative proclamation of the King’s presence through the harvest message. Not a literal shout but a symbolic royal announcement.
- (b) ‘The Great Trumpet’ (Matt. 24:31) — the last great proclamation of present truth, calling the elect from the four winds of heaven. Angels = consecrated servants (Greek: angeloi).
- (c) ‘Flaming Fire’ (2 Thess. 1:7–8) — the consuming judgments of the Time of Trouble, not literal fire. ‘Our God is a consuming fire’ (Heb. 12:29).
- (d) The Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–9) — Christ Himself called it a ‘vision.’ Peter identified it with the parousia (2 Pet. 1:16). All glory-language about the return should be read in the same visionary-symbolic register.

2 PETER 1:16–18 (NASB2020)

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty ... when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Peter explicitly identifies the transfiguration as the power and parousia of Christ in miniature — confirming that parousia-language is to be read through the lens of that visionary preview, not through literal physical expectations.

Primary Sources:

- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 138–172 — *Harmonizing the apparently conflicting passages — the balance of Study V*
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 138–145 — (a) ‘With a shout’ — 1 Thess. 4:15–17; symbolic harvest proclamation, not literal
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 145–152 — (b) ‘Great trumpet’ — Matt. 24:30–31; harvest call to the elect; angels = consecrated servants
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 152–160 — (c) ‘Flaming fire’ — 2 Thess. 1:7–8; symbolic judgments of the Epiphaneia
- SIS Vol. II, Study V** • pp. 160–172 — (d) Transfiguration — Matt. 17:1–9; Christ called it ‘a vision’; preview of parousia
- SIS Vol. III, Thy Kingdom Come** • pp. 56–60 — *Transfiguration as miniature of the Kingdom in glory; visionary character established*
- ZWT, 1894** • Reprints p. 1675 — ‘Harvest Gatherings and Siftings’ — harvest proclamation as the symbolic trumpet
- 2 Peter 1:16** — *Peter explicitly calls the transfiguration the ‘power and parousia’ of Christ in miniature*

