

# THE PAROUSIA

**Matt. 24:3; Col. 3:4; 1 Thes. 4:15 and 5:2,  
4, 8-9; 2 Thes. 1:4-10; 2:1 and 8; 2 Pet.  
3:4, 10, and 11-13.**

**The Presence of the One True King**

**By**

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## Opening.

Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT* says that *parousia* "in the New Testament" is used "especially of 'the Advent,' i.e., the future, visible 'return' from Heaven of Jesus, the Messiah, to raise the dead, hold the Last Judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the Kingdom of God." Hooooaaahh.

*Parousia* is the word James uses in 5:8 {to see another point at which Paul and James converge} where he say's, "**You too, be patient and *stand firm*, because the Lord's Coming** [His personal Presence, His *imminent* arrival to set right what has been wrong] **is near.** [In light of this, James' command is:] **Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing *at the door!*,**" v. 9. This is important for us to understand. He expected them, even commanded them, to expect the Return of the King at *any* given moment!

## The Coming of the King.

Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 speaks, "**Concerning the *Coming* [or *Parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him [*epi sunagoge*],**" which clarifies for us which *Parousia* this is {the Second and not the First}. The definite article being used before the first noun but not before the second indicates these are complimentary elements of the same event.

In Matthew 24:3, "**As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the Disciples came to Him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, '*when* will this happen, and *what* will be the sign of Your Coming and of the End of the Age?'**" From this He launches out on the Olivet Discourse of chs. 24-25, a lengthy prophetic discourse of signs which would precede His Return and accompany His Return.

1 Thessalonians 4:15— Paul writes, "**According to the Lord's *own* Word [Matthew 24:3; Mark 13 and Luke 21], we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the Coming of the Lord [the *Parousia* of Jesus Christ], will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.**" Here's what's interesting. In 5:2 he connects the "**Coming of the Lord**" in ch. 4 with the "**Day of the Lord**" in ch. 5. Paul says in v. 4, "**But you, Brothers [and Sisters], are not *in* darkness so that this Day [the Day of the Lord] should surprise you like a thief. You are all Sons of the *Light* and Sons of the *Day* [the Day' of Deliverance]. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness,**" v. 5. V. 9— "**For God did not appoint us to *suffer wrath* ...but to receive salvation [rescue, deliverance] through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Do you see this? "**Wrath**" is what's coming on the nations of the Earth; "**wrath**" is what's coming on an unbelieving Israel; "**wrath**" is what's coming to corrupt cultures and sin-sick societies

in our present world; “**wrath**” is what characterizes the judgment of God on the Day of the Lord. But “**God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation.**” Amen?

2 Thessalonians 2:8 says, “**And then the lawless one will be revealed....**” Yes, once the restraining hand of God is lifted. He will come, according to the Revelation of Jesus, as the dictator of a mighty Empire, a coalition of nations: the prophecies of Daniel {7:19-27} and John speak of this as something akin to the old Roman Empire, a new form of an old enemy {17:3, 8, and 11}. He may begin his career as the Secretary-General of the UN, Defense Minister of Israel, or president of the European Union; maybe even President of the United States. Revelation 13 describes his power, authority, and rule, *who* it is that gives him his power, authority and rule {the “**dragon**”}, and the worship directed to him by the false prophet. Paul writes, it is he “**whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His Coming** [‘His *Parousia*’ — cf. Revelation 19:11-20].”

In 2 Peter 3:4 Peter wrote how those who scoff at and mock the prophetic word “**will say, ‘Where is this “Coming” [this *Parousia*] He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the Beginning of Creation.**” Then Peter does the same thing as Paul by connecting it with the “**Day of the Lord**” in v. 10 and saying it “**will come like a thief.**” And when it does, as God completes His work of New Creation, His redemption and renewal of all things, “**the Heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the Earth and everything in it will be laid bare** [*heurisko*: ‘eureka!’].”

Peter mentions the Coming of Christ on the “**Day of the Lord**” in 2 Peter 3:10. His exhortation to all of us as Followers of Jesus in v. 11 is, “**You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the Day of God and speed its coming.**” Peter uses the “**Day of God**” synonymously in this passage for the “**Day of the Lord,**” v. 10. The “**Day of God**” seems to speak to Eternity and the Kingdom to come, but its none-the-less connected with the “**Day of the Lord.**” “**That Day will bring about the destruction of the Heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.** [Here is the Hope of Resurrection.] **But in keeping with His Promise** [What promise? The ‘promise’ of His *Parousia*, the guarantee of His Return to set the world at rights!] **we are looking forward to a New Heaven and a New Earth, the Home of Righteousness,**” v. 11c-13

Cf. 2 Peter 3:1-13.

*Parousia*: the Presence of Royalty.

The language the NT uses for the Return of the King is *parousia*. And *parousia* had two

basic meanings in the ancient world. One, it speaks of *personal presence*, one's presence as opposed to absence; in fact, it was a technical term in the cults of the ancient world for the coming of a hidden deity, a god waiting to make his presence felt by the revelation of his power. And two, *parousia* became the official term for persons of high rank, especially kings and emperors, paying visit to a colony or province. We would call this a *royal presence*.

**Cf. Zechariah 14:3-16.**

Now... suppose Paul, along with the Followers of Jesus in the early Church, wanted to say the Lord they worshipped was near in spirit yet absent in body but one **"Day"** He would be present in body, *powerfully* present, and then the whole world— they included— would know the sudden and transforming power of His Presence. The word one would use for this is *parousia*. On the other hand, suppose these same **"apostles and prophets"** who formed the **"foundation"** of **"God's Household"** {Eph. 2:19-21} wanted to say the Jesus who had been raised from the dead and exalted to **"the right hand of God"** was the rightful Ruler of the world, the *true* Emperor before whom all other emperors bow their knees in fear and wonder. Suppose they wanted to express that, just as Caesar might someday visit a colony like Philippi or Thessalonica so the absent but ruling *Kurios* of the World would one Day appear in person within this world, and rule in power. The most natural term to use in the lexicon of 1<sup>st</sup> century languages is *parousia*.

Follow me here as we see both the cultural context and a very practical application to how we live today in a highly politicized world. Everybody, *everybody* has an opinion about what would make our country a 'better place,' and *who* we should vote for, and what *party* to belong to, and why this elected official is *wrong* and that one is *right* and this one is right and that one is wrong. **They're *all* wrong ...and I'll tell you why.** Any man who willingly seeks political office because he believes himself fit to rule over his fellow Men, is {almost without exception} an ego-driven megalomaniac. **People ought to be *forced* into office by the content of their character— not the color of their skin or the leverage that they have or the money that they spend. But that's not politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is it?**

Hear this through the ears of a Greek or Roman in the Mediterranean world. The language which describes the Return of the King to claim what is rightfully His, the one Sovereign Occasion yet to come, is highly charged political language which says: **Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.** If Jesus is **"Lord,"** if Jesus is *Kurios*, if Jesus is God, then this means by implication that Caesar... is *not*! *Parousia* is one of those terms in which the human authors of the New Testament are able to say, overtly and yet covertly, Jesus is the Reality of which Caesar is the parody— and you can add to this Caesar's Governor, or Senator, or President, his Demopan or Republicrat.

What does this mean for us as we wait, patiently, for the *Parousia*, the Second Coming of Christ? It means our Lord and Liege demands an allegiance, a passionate consecration of heart-soul-mind-and-strength, before which all other allegiances pale in comparison. **He *demand*s it and He *deserve*s it.** This is the heartbeat of the Gospel, the lifeblood of the NT, Jesus' call to "**follow Me,**" to become My Apprentice, to walk in My Way. This is a love which goes far beyond Family, clan, tribe, neighborhood, State, Nation or ideology. This is everything we *are* given to the One who gave everything He *had* "**for the joy set before Him**" {Heb. 12:2b}, which was the ransom of your heart! Is there anything obscuring our allegiance to the King — my allegiance, your allegiance, our allegiance? **Because this is the day to dethrone it.** This day, this time, right now.

### The Final Piece of the Puzzle.

Here's the final piece of the puzzle, the last bit of imagery Paul is presenting when he uses the term *parousia*. It was common, and characteristically required, for the citizens of a Roman colony to go out and *meet* their Emperor or King in a designated location some distance from the city gates yet near enough that they could accompany him into the city itself. It would've been *disrespectful* to have him arrive at the gates of the city without this, as if his subjects couldn't be bothered to set aside their daily grind and greet him properly.

Once they'd met him at the desired location, they then become the *royal escort* into the city itself. When Paul speaks of "**meeting the Lord in the air**" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, this is exactly what he's talking about. The point is having gone out to meet our returning Lord, our Conquering King, we will escort Him royally into His domain, back to where *we* came from, in anticipation of His Rule. There is a parallel in meaning with Philippians 3:20: being "**citizens of Heaven,**" as any citizen of Philippi would know, doesn't mean one is expecting to go back to the mother city but rather one is expecting the Emperor to come from the royal city to give the colony its full dignity, to rescue it if necessary, to subdue its enemies once and for all and set right all which has been wronged.

It's an amazing image coming down to us from the culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this image of Christ the Risen King returning to rule and to reign. The risen Jesus is both the model and the means for our resurrection bodies as well as our rule and reign alongside Him in His Kingdom. Paul in Colossians 3:4 said, "**When Christ, who is your Life, appears, then you *also* will appear with Him in glory.**" Paul tells the Thessalonians that "**as a result**" of their "**perseverance and faith**" in tremendous trial and persecution, they "**will be counted *worthy* of the Kingdom of God, for which**" they were suffering — 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5. They were suffering for the Kingdom in the present, so they might rule alongside Jesus in the future.

When will this happen? “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus... with *everlasting destruction....*” They will be “*shut out* from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power *on the Day* He comes to be glorified in His holy People and to be marveled at among all those who have believed,” vv. 7b, 8, 9a and 10a. “This includes *you*” and *I*.

Yet Paul is not the only New Testament writer to speak to what will happen when Jesus is revealed in glory. John declares that when Jesus “appears, we shall be *like Him*, for we shall see Him *as He is*” {1 Jn. 3:2c}.

Here’s what I think the absolute assurance of Jesus’ Return means for you and I. Jesus doesn’t love us because theologically He *has* to, He loves us because He *chooses* to. **And this makes all the difference in Eternity.** He asks the same from those who claim Him as their King: that we would *love* Him, *look* for Him, *long* for Him with everything we are, not because we *have* to, but because {in light of His glory and greatness} we *desire* to, because we choose to honor Him as He asks— above all else that exists.

## **Finale.**

Paul speaks in Titus 2:13 of the “**Blessed Hope— the Glorious Appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,**” and in this magnificent phrase he sums up the personal, imminent Coming of the Lord of Glory *for* and *with* His Redeemed Ones {1 Cor. 15:42-58; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Thes. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9}. We believe this with everything we are. And we look with great longing for His Return in glory to defeat His enemies and establish His literal and physical reign over the Earth— the *Parousia* or 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent {cf. **Revelation 20:1-10**}.