

Parousia

9

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The Parousia of Jesus Christ

**“The Greek language is generally
conceded to be the most effective
vehicle ever developed for
expressing thought...”**

by Charles Cooper

“Its possibilities of subtle distinction in the expression of thought are vast,...

and the writers of the New Testament were remarkably adept at using the finer capacities of the language.”¹ This among other reasons explains why God chose to record the New Testament in Koine (common) Greek. However, with the split of the church between the Greek speaking people of the East and the Latin speaking people of the West, the need for an authorized Latin translation of the Bible in the West became imperative. In A.D. 383, Pope Damasus commissioned a young scholar to translate the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) into Latin. This monumental work would eventually acquire the name *Vulgate* which means *current*.² The importance of the Latin Vulgate is very significant.

(It was for hundreds of years the only Bible in universal use in Europe... (It has given to us much of our modern theological terminology as well as being the sponsor for many Gr[reek] words which have enriched our conceptions.³

Two very important examples of “modern theological terminology” that tie directly to the Latin Vulgate are the terms *rapture* and *advent*. The English term *rapture* comes from the Latin word *rapere* which means “to seize.” The translator of the Latin Vulgate chose this term to translate the Greek verb *harpazo* (to catch away) in I Thessalonians 4:17. The term *advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means “arrival.” The Latin Vulgate uses this term to translate the Greek term *parousia*. Therefore, when we use *rapture* and *advent* to refer to the Lord Jesus’ return, we are using loaned words from Latin.

The Problem Stated

Rapture and *second advent* are key phrases used to describe events associated with the next major phase in the earthly career of Jesus Christ. One of two problems with these phrases is the seemingly forgotten fact that none of them actually appear in the Greek New Testament. While these terms were adequate for a Latin translation 1500 years ago, they are not adequate for an English translation today. No modern English translation of the Bible utilizes these terms. The second problem with these phrases is the lack of biblical preciseness. This lack of biblical preciseness has contributed greatly to the confusion regarding the *timing* of Christ’s coming and the *events* that will occur in conjunction with that coming. Well meaning men and women are misled into thinking that the “rapture” of the church and the second “advent” of Christ are two different and unrelated events, the rapture

occurring years before the advent of Christ at the battle of Armageddon. For example, they would say that the *parousia* found in I Thessalonians 4:15 is the rapture *parousia* and the *parousia* referred to in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:3), the Armageddon *parousia*.

However, it is the thesis of this article that the *parousia* (coming) is a biblically precise (technical) term that in each and every usage concerning Christ’s return, is referring to a general time span that is initiated by the rapture of the church, through to and including the final event of Christ’s coming, the battle of Armageddon.

Technical Verses Non-Technical Usage

The first matter we must deal with concerns the question of whether or not *parousia* is a technical term that covers the future ministry of Christ. Specifically, we are talking about the timeframe that is initiated when He returns to receive the church to Himself, to the time He comes with His armies for the battle of Armageddon. A technical term is a designation given to a word or phrase in light of the fact that a certain meaning is conveyed each and every time it is used. An example of a technical term in Paul’s writings is *Kalein* (to call). It is a technical term “that carries the content ‘God designates as (or causes to be) a Christian.’ It is God’s action of bestowing upon a person eternal salvation.”⁴ Therefore, Paul argues that salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God. Each time Paul uses this term he means the exact same thing. Can a case be made for *parousia* as a technical term in the New Testament? That is, can a single precise meaning be designated for *parousia* each and every time it occurs in the New Testament?

Proponents of A Non-Technical Usage

There is very little debate concerning the fact that *parousia* was a technical term outside the New Testament. Extant manuscripts evidence solid usage of *parousia*. Adolf G. Deissmann states, “From the Ptolemaic period down into the 2nd cent[ury] A.D. we are able to trace the word in the East as a *technical expression* for the arrival or the visit of the king or the emperor.”⁵ Few would debate Deissmann on this point. However, with regards to New Testament usage, Dr. John F. Walvoord writes, “As

used in the New Testament, it [*parousia*] is obviously not a technical word...⁶ He further writes, contrary to how the term is used outside the N.T., ‘It is clear, at least, that no technical meaning for the term is established which would limit its use to either one or the other, i.e., the rapture or the second coming.’⁷ ‘It is the viewpoint of the writer [Walvoord] that [*parousia*] is used in a general and not a technical sense and that [*it is*] descriptive of both the rapture and the glorious return of Christ to earth.’⁸ Walvoord’s comments reflect a change in the thinking of Pretribulationists during the early 1940s. Dr. Richard R. Reiter writes,

Prior to the mid 1940s, pretribulationists generally viewed the Greek words *parousia* (“coming”), *epiphaneia* (“appearing”), and *apokalupsis* (“revelation”) as **technical terms specifying distinct phases of the return**. They interpreted *parousia* as Christ’s appearance in the sky including the Rapture of the church to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:16-17). By contrast *epiphaneia* and *apokalupsis* referred to the return of Christ to earth with His saints following the Great Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Peter 1:7), [Emphasis added].⁹

That pretribulationists have had a change in perspective on this matter is also supported by the comment of Keith L. Brooks,

We are fully aware of the discussion that has been going on over the Greek words ‘parousia’ (personal presence) and ‘apokalupsis’ (unveiling or revelation). Perhaps some excellent teachers have been mistaken in saying that the ‘parousia’ **always indicates the moment** when He comes for His saints and that ‘apokalupsis’ is used only for the moment when He comes in power and authority [Emphasis added].¹⁰

Unfortunately, the pretribulationists’ change in perspective after the 1940s is wrong. Basically, the pretribulationist’s solution to the matter is to adopt a two *parousia* eschatology. In the absence of a clearly explicit statement that there are two future *parousias*, the reader is left debating which passages refer to the first *parousia* and which passages refer to the second *parousia*. The prewrath position believes

that there is only one future *parousia* of Christ and, using the word in the technical sense, it refers to Christ’s coming in general, including both the snatching away of believers and the battle of Armageddon, thus removing the debate about which passages refer to which *parousia*.

Proponents of A Technical Usage

With regard to the use of *parousia* in the New Testament, BAGD, a very respected Greek lexicon in use today, states that *parousia* is used “in a special technical sense... of Christ.”¹¹ James E. Frame in the *International Critical Commentary Series* states,

Parousia is used untechnically in I Cor. 16:17, II Cor. 7:6-7, 10:10, Phil. 1:26 and 2:12... Whether the technical use (II Thess.] 2:19, 3:13, 4:14, 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8 and I Cor. 15:23...) is a creation of the early church... or is taken over from an earlier period... is uncertain.¹²

Frame recognizes a difference between the technical and untechnical usage of *parousia*. Frame is supported by Leon Morris when he states, “In the New Testament it [*parousia*] became a technical expression for the royal visit, the second coming of our Lord.”¹³ Tracy L. Howard also supports a technical sense for *parousia* when he says, “In the New Testament the word takes on a technical sense for the future advent of Christ.”¹⁴

In commenting on *parousia*, D. Michael Martin writes, “Paul used the word to refer both to his own visits to his churches... and in the more technical sense of a divine or regal visitation (as when referring to the coming of the Lord...).”¹⁵ Robert D. Culver when explaining Paul’s use of *parousia* in I Corinthians 15:20-24 states, “Deismann (sic)... has shown that parousia (presence, coming) was the technical term for the arrival of a potentate or his representatives. That it usually—this text included—signifies in the New Testament the coming of Christ to set up the Messianic kingdom accords with this definition, and is the opinion of many modern commentators.”¹⁶ Both Mueller and Eerdman writing in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* support the conclusion that *parousia* is a technical term in the New Testament.¹⁷

To this point, we are able to conclude that scholars are divided concerning whether *parousia* is a technical term or not. The final determination must be made in light of its usage.

New Testament Usage

The term *parousia* is variously translated. Dr. W. Harold Mare writes, “A brief look at Parousia in Liddell-Scott’s *A Greek-English Lexicon* shows that this word was used from the Homeric period down through that of the NT, with meanings ranging from the *presence* of persons to their *arrival* or *advent*.”¹⁸ Dr. John F. Walvoord argues that *parousia* “has come to mean not simply *presence* but the act by which

the presence is brought about, i.e., by the *coming* of the individual.¹⁹ Hogg and Vine take the opposite view.

The usual translation is misleading, because ‘coming’ is more appropriate to other words... the difference being that whereas these words fix the attention on the journey to, and the arrival at, a place, *parousia* fixes it on the stay which follows on the arrival there. It would be preferable, therefore, to transliterate the word rather than translate it, that is to use ‘parousia,’ rather than ‘coming,’ wherever the reference is to the Lord Jesus.²⁰

The debate concerning whether *parousia* emphasizes different arrivals of Christ for different purposes, or a singular arrival and the presence of Christ that is initiated by the rapture of the church and ending with the battle of Armageddon, forces a choice between one or the other for every passage where *parousia* occurs.

This, however, is an over simplification. As a technical term, *parousia* would represent a multifaceted event each time beginning with the rapture of the church. Each passage must be evaluated in light of this context. Hogg and Vine’s suggestion that *parousia* be transliterated instead of translated is a good one. This allows the reader to evaluate each passage in light of the context for him or herself. Hogg and Vine offer one other suggestion which is worthy of our attention. They indicate that “The Parousia of the Lord Jesus is thus a period with a *beginning*, a *course*, and a *conclusion*.” (italic added)²¹ I am in agreement with this point, however, I do not agree with their division of this period concerning what events will happen and when they will occur.²²

The term *parousia* is used twenty-four times in the New Testament.²³ Of these twenty-four occurrences, seventeen refer to the coming of Jesus in the future²⁴ (1 Thess. 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8; 1 Cor. 15:23; Jas 5.7, 8; 2 Pet. 1:16, 3:4, 12; 1 Jn 2:28; Mat. 24:3, 27, 37 and 39). Dr. John F. Walvoord indicates that all the verses above refer to the rapture with the exception of Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:8 and 2 Pet. 1:16 which refer to the second coming of Christ at the battle of Armageddon.²⁵ However, if *parousia* in the seventeen future oriented verses can be shown to refer to the same event, then sufficient grounds would be established to warrant designating *parousia* as a technical term whenever it is used in connection with the future return of Jesus Christ.

James’ Usage

Taking the seventeen occurrences of *parousia* in the N.T. which refer to the future ministry of Jesus Christ in chronological order, we begin with the reference in the book of James.²⁶ James 5:7-8 states,

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late

rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord is at hand.

The book of James is specifically addressed “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad...” These Jewish Christians (the righteous remnant of Israel) are urged to exercise patience until the *parousia* of Christ. In light of the nearness of Christ’s *parousia*, James comforts the suffering Jewish Christians with the knowledge that Jesus, “the Judge is standing at the door,” (James 5:9). Surely James is emphasizing the beginning of Christ’s *parousia*. The suffering that James’ audience was experiencing was to be alleviated at Christ’s *parousia*. James uses the Greek preposition ἕως (*heos* which is translated *until*) which in this context basically refers to the period up to the *parousia*. The very beginning of Christ’s *parousia* spells relief for God’s people because when Christ comes, the *parousia* referred to in this passage, will be initiated by the rapture of the church.

Pauline Usage

Paul picks up James’ teaching concerning Christ’s coming to bring relief to His people in the Thessalonian Letters. He writes to the Thessalonians, “For they themselves declare... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven...” Paul uses a term here that means “to await.” Interestingly, the end of each chapter in this letter ends with a reference to the Lord’s return. In I Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, and 5:23 the term *parousia* is used. The first example of the term *parousia* in the writings of Paul is in I Thessalonians 2:19 which states, “For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming [*parousia*]?” The Thessalonian church was composed of mostly Gentiles with some Jews.²⁷ Paul informs the Thessalonians that they are his hope and joy in the presence of Christ at His *parousia*. Along with this, Paul adds a prayer that Jesus will cause love to grow among the Thessalonians, “so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus with all His saints,” (I Thess. 3:13). This is the second example of *parousia* in Paul’s writings. Like

I Thess. 2:19, here Paul is emphasizing the beginning of Christ's *parousia*. BADG indicates that the preposition *en*, translated "in" denotes "the point of time when something occurs."²⁸ This is Paul's favorite preposition to introduce the Lord's *parousia*.

The third example of the term *parousia* in Paul's writings occurs in I Thess. 4:15. Paul instructs the Thessalonians that those who survive until the time of Christ's *parousia* will be taken to be with the Lord when He comes from heaven. This is an event certainly connected with the beginning of Christ's *parousia* when the believer is removed and the wrath of God is poured out on those who remain.

The fourth example occurs in connection with I Thess. 5:23. Paul prays that the Lord will preserve the Thessalonians blameless until the *parousia* of Christ. Again, Paul emphasizes an action connected with the beginning of Christ's *parousia*. No indication is given that the Thessalonians need perseverance through Christ's *parousia*, but only up until or at the start of it, when the believer will be removed and the wrath of God will be poured out on those who remain.

The fifth example of *parousia* in the Thessalonians Letters occurs in II Thess. 2:1 and it reads, "Now brethren, concerning the coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you..." What Paul alludes to in I Thess. 4:15-17 in detail, he summarizes here. Paul places himself in the same category as the Thessalonians. They will be gathered together at the *parousia* of Christ. Consistent with Paul's references in I Thessalonians, the emphasis is on the beginning of the event.

The sixth and final occurrence of *parousia* in the Thessalonian Letters is in II Thess. 2:8. Paul acknowledges that Jesus will slay the lawless one "with the breath of His mouth" and will destroy him "with the brightness of His coming," (*parousia*). Pretribulationists debate this verse because of its obvious connection with the lawless one. They assign this verse to a second *parousia* which happens at Armageddon when Christ comes with His saints. However, there is no **explicit** biblical statement that the church accompanies Christ at Armageddon. There is no textually explicit indication that there are two *parousias* presented in the N.T. There is a simple and more logical explanation of the data

presented in the N.T., namely the prewrath position.

One other fact argues against the pretribulationist interpretation of II Thess. 2:8. After Antichrist recovers from his wound, he is not physically killed again. Revelation 19:20 indicates that at Armageddon he will be "cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." A closer examination of II Thess. 2:8 reveals that the verb "slay" does not have its usual literal meaning. Rather, "(t)he verb is frequently used to designate murder; the end of the lawless one will be as decisive as that of a man who is murdered."²⁹ The verb "bring to an end" better explains Paul's intent. Leon Morris captures the essence of the verse when he writes, "In the present passage the verb refers to the robbing of the Man of Lawlessness of all significance, rather than to his destruction..."³⁰ A literal translation of Paul's intended meaning in II Thess. 2:8 would be, "And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and render insignificant by the appearance of His coming..." Therefore, Paul is not indicating that Antichrist will be physically killed at the Lord's second *parousia* as pretribbers teach. But rather, the Lord will diminish the significance of Antichrist. First, the Lord will cut short the persecution of Antichrist by taking away the object of his persecution as the Lord predicted in Matthew 24:22. The church will be snatched away to heaven. Second, the Day of the Lord's wrath begins "and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day," (Is. 2:17).

The final place in the writings of Paul where the term *parousia* occurs is I Corinthians 15:23 which states, "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming (*parousia*)." Paul informs the Corinthians who were predominately Gentile that the next phase of the first resurrection will occur at Christ's *parousia*. Few would argue that Paul emphasizes an action that is connected with the beginning of Christ's *parousia* here. It is important to recognize that Paul places the emphasis in all six verses where he uses the word *parousia* on the beginning of Christ's one and only *parousia*.

Petrine Usage

The Apostle Peter also makes a contribution to our discussion. He says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Some have concluded that Peter is here discussing the first coming of Christ. However, Lenski argues, "The double terms have but one article: 'the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and Parousia,' so that 'power and Parousia' constitute one idea, 'power' bringing out the thought of the omnipotent might involved in the Lord's second coming..."³¹ It would appear that Peter is speaking to the end result of the Day of the Lord, rather than emphasizing the beginning or the course of the Lord's *parousia*. Peter describes the ultimate result unlike the Revelation of Jesus Christ to His bond-servants which indicate that the destruction of the earth will

progressively worsen until Armageddon. Peter's second reference to Christ's *parousia* occurs in II Peter 3:3-4. Peter informs the readers that "scoffers will come in the last days... saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming (*parousia*)?'" Few would argue that this is not a reference to the beginning of the Lord's future ministry on earth. Given that once the church is removed from the earth, "all things" certainly will not "continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Peter's final reference occurs in II Peter 3:12. In this verse, it is "the day of God" that is coming (*parousia*). The fact that Peter refers to the Day of the Lord in 3:10 with the same results as the day of God in 3:12, supports the conclusion that they are one and the same. Here we find a reference to events that will transpire during the course of our Lord's *parousia*. The divine wrath that will destroy the created order follows the removal of the church at the beginning of Christ's *parousia*.

Johannine Usage

The Apostle John has only one example of *parousia*. "And now, little children, abide in Him, that if He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (*parousia*)," I John 2:28. John's use of that little word *if* introduces a third class condition which indicates that something may or may not happen. What is conditional here is not the event itself (Christ will return), but the uncertainty of the timing of Christ's return. The fact that John adds an element of uncertainty requires that we understand this passage as a reference to Christ's future ministry of removing the church before the wrath of God begins. There is uncertainty about the timing of the beginning of the Lord's *parousia*, but there is no uncertainty about the period following the conclusion of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Consistent with Paul and Peter, John's focus is on the beginning of the *parousia*.

Matthew's Usage

The final four examples of *parousia* in the N.T. with reference to the future ministry of Christ occur in Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, and 39. These are the most controversial passages concerning the use of *parousia*! Pretribblers want to make these passages a reference to the battle of Armageddon only, rather than a reference to the overall event of Christ's coming, beginning with the rapture of the church. Matthew's employment of *parousia* is most instructive. The disciples' question and the Lord's answer provide a detailed explanation of end-time events that form the basis of the teachings of Paul, Peter, James, and John. Matthew, who wrote his gospel after Paul, Peter, James, and John wrote their epistles, would certainly have offered some corrective insight if his use of the term *parousia* was different than that of Paul, Peter, James, and John. Matthew on several occasions explains to his readers information that clarifies something he wrote. He explained Hebrew and Aramaic words so that his readers would better understand his points. He quotes O.T. passages to explain N.T. events. One should conclude that Matthew means the exact same thing as Paul,

Peter, James and John by his use of the term *parousia*. Matthew specifically uses this term to tie together the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Matthew emphasizes the beginning of Christ's *parousia* in all four occurrences.

Conclusion

What shall we say then? Is the *parousia* of Christ that future ministry of Jesus Christ which is initiated by the snatching away of the saints, followed by the punishment of the wicked? The answer is an emphatic yes! The *parousia* in Matthew is the same that is in Paul, Peter, James and John. Other than God's revelation to Jesus recorded by John, Matthew gives the most detailed outline of end-time events. Paul, Peter, James, and John fill in a few blanks and restate a few of the details given by Matthew. The chart on the next page summarizes the N.T. teachings concerning the *parousia* of Christ. Notice the parallelism between the Olivet Discourse and the teachings of the Apostles.

Pretribulationists like Dr. Walvoord argue for a non-technical designation of *parousia*. This allows them to teach two *parousias* separated by seven years. Posttribulationists support a technical designation for *parousia*. This allows them to teach that the *parousia* of Christ will involve the deliverance of believers and the punishment of the wicked. They teach that believers are caught up to meet Jesus in the air and then will immediately come back to earth for Armageddon. The prewrath position recognizes the fact that the truth is a synthesis of these two positions. *Parousia* is not a technical term in general throughout the N.T. It is, however, used in a technical sense in the seventeen N.T. references to Christ's future return. "The grandeur of the Lord, the honor due him at his arrival, and the significance of his coming for both his enemies and his friends are all implicit in the technical use of the term *parousia*."³² The technical sense covers the timeframe from the coming of Christ to snatch away the church until the ultimate destruction of the wicked at Armageddon. The time between these events is neither immediate, i.e. no time, as posttribblers teach nor divided by seven years as pretribblers insist. At best, all that can be said about the time interval between the beginning and the end of the Lord's *parousia*, is that it will be a single

The Olivet Discourse on the *Parousia* of Christ

The return of Christ is called “His *parousia*” by Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mat. 24:3; Mark 13:3).

The *parousia* of Christ will be seen and heard universally (Mat. 24:27).

The *parousia* of Christ will follow the days of great tribulation of Antichrist (Mat. 24:15-22; 29).

Believers have no need to be warned about the *parousia* of Christ (Mat. 24:23-26).

The Day of the Lord is associated with the *parousia* of Christ (Mat. 24:29).

All unbelievers of the Earth will suffer at Christ's *parousia* (Mat. 24:30).

The *parousia* of Christ will be with power and great glory (Mat. 24:30).

Angels are identified with the *parousia* of Christ (Mat. 24:31).

Christ will send His Angels to gather the elect from every where at His *parousia* (Mat. 24:31; Mark 13:27).

The sending of the Angels will be accompanied by a great blast of a trumpet (Mat. 24:31).

Tribulation saints will be delivered at the *parousia* (Mat. 24:13, 29-31).

The Disciples are warned that a negative judgment could result at the *parousia* of Christ (Mat. 24:45-51).

The *Parousia* Outside the Gospels

Paul (I Cor. 15:23), James (Ja. 5:7-11), Peter (II Pet. 3:4), and John (I Jo. 2:28-29) all call the return of Christ a *parousia*.

The *parousia* of Christ will be seen and heard universally (I Thess. 4:16).

The *parousia* of Christ will follow the persecution of Antichrist (II Thess. 2:1-10).

Believers have no need to be misled concerning the sequences of events during the end times (II Thess. 2:1-10).

The Day of the Lord is associated with the *parousia* of Christ (II Thess. 2:1-10).

Unbelievers will be punished at Christ's *parousia* (2 Pet. 3:4; James 5:7-12).

The “brightness of His *parousia*” will bring Antichrist's persecution to an end (II Thess. 2:8).

Angels are identified with the *parousia* of Christ (I Thess. 3:11-13).

The next phase of the resurrection occurs at the *parousia* of Christ (I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 4:16).

The *parousia* will be accompanied by the trumpet of God (I Cor. 15:23 and I Thess. 4:13-18).

Believers are to expect deliverance at the *parousia* of Christ (James 5:7-11).

Paul and John warn believers that negative judgment could result at the *parousia* of Christ (I Thess. 5:23; I John 2:28-29).

event **no less** than six months (the fifth trumpet judgment will last five months [Rev. 9:5] and Armageddon occurs at the end of the 30 day reclamation period [Dan. 12:11]), and **no more** than two to three years (the time necessary to accomplish all the trumpet and bowl judgments of God's wrath once the great tribulation is cut short by Christ's *parousia* in the second half of Daniel's 70th Week).

The *parousia* of Christ will cut short the persecution of Satan/ Antichrist, (Matt. 24:22, Mark 13:20). When God decides it is time to end the persecution of Satan/ Antichrist against His elect, God will turn out all natural light sources, (Joel 3:15, Rev. 6:12-13, Matt. 24:29); then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, (Matt. 24:30); then Jesus will be seen coming on the clouds with angelic accompaniment and the sounding of the trumpet of God, (Matt. 24:31, I Thess. 4:16); then the dead in Christ will be called from the grave, (I Thess. 4:16, I Cor. 15:52); then God will send forth the angels to gather the living elect into the air, (I Thess. 4:17); then Christ and the elect (both Israel and Gentiles) will return to heaven, (John 14:1-3); then the six trumpet judgments will fall upon the earth to finish out the 70th Week of Daniel. The first day after the end of the 70th Week of Daniel the death of the two witnesses will occur, (Rev.11:7-10). Christ will immediately come to earth and gather together all Israel for her salvation, (Rev. 10:7, 14:1; Rom. 11:25-27; Zech. 14:4); then Christ will split the Mount of Olives and send Israel to Azel for the duration of the bowl judgments, (Zech. 14:5); then Christ shall return to heaven while the bowl judgments fall upon the kingdom of Satan, (Rev. 14:14-16:21); then the final event called Armageddon will occur, (Rev. 19:11-21). The *parousia* of our great God and King will end with the beginning of the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth.

ENDNOTES

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3. *ibid.*
4. William W. Klein, "Paul's Use of Kalein: A Proposal," *JTS* 27 (March 1984): 63.
5. Adolf G. Deissmann, *Light From Ancient East*, trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 372.
6. Walvoord, "New Testament Words for the Lord's Coming," p. 285.
7. *ibid.*, 289.
8. *ibid.*, 284. Italic and emphasis added.
9. Richard R. Reiter, et al, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p. 30.
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12. James E. Frame, *Epistle of St. Paul to The Thessalonians*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 123.
13. Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, in NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984), 96-97.
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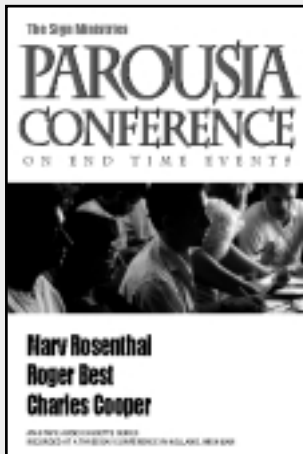
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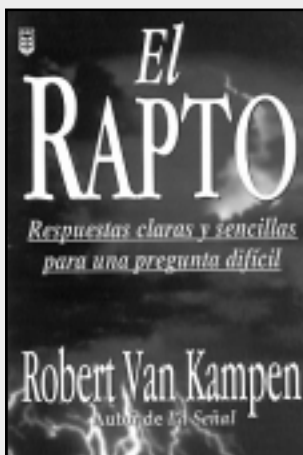


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Commentary



The conditions of the world in which we live would lead any serious Bible believing Christian to recognize that we are living in the last days. Worldwide conditions are in turmoil and there seems to be a lot more questions than answers as to how to solve the various dilemmas. International terrorism is now a real threat. Here in the United States we have a president in trouble, problems with crime, even crime being committed by children and there seems to be no solution to the drug and alcohol problems.

In spite of all this there is an obvious turning away from God rather than to Him. As believers, we seem to be a threat rather than a help to the world in which we live. This, of course, is to be expected since man without God is depraved and is traveling the broad road to destruction. Christians who were once respected in our society for their high moral standards and integrity are now targeted as the “radical right.”

In Isaiah 5, God is pronouncing judgment on Israel for their blatant wickedness and yet as we read the passage it sounds so much like the day in which we live.

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink; who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right” (Isaiah 5:20-23).

This entire passage applies to our day but in particular notice the last phrase, “take away the rights of the ones who are in the right.”

There is only one right way and that is God’s way. He has laid it out for us in His Word. Legislation does not make something right. For example, abortion is murder according to God’s Word and no amount of manipulating or legislating will make it right.

May I urge you to live godly in this present world and recognize that we cannot right all the wrongs in the world. But there is a day coming soon when God will pour out His wrath. At that time He will take care of those who are opposing us. As Paul encouraged the Christians of Thessalonica in the midst of their suffering: “Therefore we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-8).

We may be called upon to face persecution, many in our world are experiencing it at this very time. As we move closer to the end of the age we can expect it. However, God has called us to be faithful messengers of the gospel. The world in which we live will only get worse, but what blessed assurance we have in Jesus Christ. He not only is going to come to rescue us, but He will then deal out retribution to this sinful world through His wrath.

Letters From Our Readers

First, I wanted to thank you and the other staff at *Parousia* for turning out such a dynamic, truth imparting, quarterly. Rarely do I wait with as much anticipation to receive anything in the mail as I do this wonderful vessel of God’s truth.

— Pastor D.W., Pennsylvania

Your monthly newsletter is packed with wonderful scriptural insight. For the longest time I’ve tried to differentiate the “gospels” and the “Kingdoms”—you make it so simple to understand.

— P. R., Tennessee

I have read your book entitled *The Sign* and have found it to be very enlightening. It is a well-organized, well written book. Indeed, it is unquestionably the best book I have read on end-time events. Thank you for your labor in communicating the truth of the 70th week to the body of Christ.

— C. E., Indiana

Thank you so very much for all your assistance in the recent past in enabling me to get hold of materials which outline in precise detail the Prewrath position. I cannot adequately express how blessed I have been as I have gradually apprehended the

unique implications of the prewrath theological framework.

— J. K., Ireland

I have read *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* by Marvin Rosenthal and am almost finished reading your book *The Sign*. What a blessing both have been to me! So many questions answered and proven by Scripture!

— J. R., Florida

It is so good to see that you all are encouraging us out here who do not believe in the pretrib rapture position. Even when I was a pretribber, I had serious doubts about the timing of the rapture based on

Matthew 24. It just didn’t seem to fit with what the Master was trying to tell us. Anyway, thank you for all that you do and keep up the good work.

— B. B., Illinois

I have been richly blessed by your teaching in Nashik. It was God who brought you into our midst... Thank you for the copy of *The Rapture Question Answered, Plain & Simple*. I didn’t simply read this book, but studied it with the help of God’s Word. This book helped me to teach God’s Word on the topic of the rapture in home Bible study groups.

— J. R. India

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