

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA.55:10    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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## THE "PAROUSIA" IN MATT. 24

It amazes me how men who profess to be students of the Word of God can treat the word *parousia* as if it always means "coming," acting as if this definition were a foregone conclusion, and using it as if it were the only meaning it could possibly have. Such practices reveal superficial consideration and a complete lack of objectivity. Their reason for attaching this misleading meaning to this important word is based upon the fact that the King James translators rendered it by the word *coming* in twenty-two of its twenty-four occurrences. They should face up to the fact that in doing this they actually erased the glorious truth of the parousia of Jesus Christ from the New Testament.

Many students have been surprised to find that the word *parousia* is not just another name for the glorious journey that Jesus Christ will make when He returns to earth, but that it is the Biblical term, the actual divine description for the personal presence of Jesus Christ upon the earth for a well-defined period of a thousand years. Two important studies in this truth will be found in SEED AND BREAD, Issues No. **SB024** and **SB025**.

As has already been suggested the word *parousia* is found twenty four times in the Greek New Testament. It is translated "coming" in twenty-two of these and in two it is rendered "presence" (See 2 Cor. 10:10 and Phil 2:12).

It is a well known fact that when one's creedal position becomes so fixed that it is not subject to any change, then there is no possible room for any further truth that may come forth from the careful study of the Word of God. It was this situation that caused the theologians who arose after the reformation to adopt the position that everything that was germane to God's truth had been brought forth by the reformers and that nothing needed to be changed or additions made. So, even though the very word *parousia* spoke loud and clear of a time when Jesus Christ would be personally present upon the earth, they had no time or place for this in their tight theological system.

The translators of the *King James Version* were amillennialists, and in harmony with this view the word *parousia* was incorrectly translated "coming" in twenty-two of its twenty-four occurrences. The plain facts in the case caused them to yield to the truth in the two occurrences already mentioned. No doctrine was at stake in these two passages.

In previous studies it has been shown that according to the elements of this word, New Testament usage, Classical Greek usage, Septuagint usage, and the occurrences in the papyrus, the word *parousia*, when used of beings, means a personal presence when one is present because of who or what he is and what he does in view of his position. Furthermore, it must be noted that a personal presence is not necessarily a *parousia* if the one present is not there in relationship to his position and service.

Some years ago an incident happened that well illustrates this. I was in the hospital recovering from a major operation. A doctor came in to see me, but his presence in my room could not be described as a *parousia*. He was a physician, but he was not there to perform any service that a physician usually performs. He was there because he was my friend and had come to bring me a gift to help in the expenses which I faced. Soon after he left another doctor came in to see me, and his personal presence could be properly described as a *parousia*. He was there officially to perform the services that a doctor would be expected to do.

The Greeks had two words for personal presence. The word *pareimi* which meant a personal or actual presence and nothing more, and the word *parousia* which was a technical term and meant a personal presence when one was officially present to perform official duties.

The first four occurrences of *parousia* in the New Testament give us very valuable information concerning this word and the event it describes. Most of this is lost to the average reader due to misinterpretation and misapplication. These four occurrences are all in one chapter, Matthew 24. In the third verse we learn that the twelve disciples came to the Lord Jesus privately and asked the question: **"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of your parousia, even the consummation of the eon?"**

In Issue No. **SB025**, I dealt with the rule of Greek grammar that fully justifies this translation. This was further expounded in Issue No. **SB122**, and it can be stated simply as follows: "When *kai*, the copulative 'and' connects two nouns of the same case, and if the definite article precedes the first noun and is absent from the second noun, the latter noun always refers to the same person, place, or thing that has been set forth in the first noun."

This rule applies to the two nouns found in the question asked by the apostles (*parousias* and *sunteleias*). They were asking about one thing, not two things. The first noun has the definite article, the second noun does not, even though it is found in Stephen's text. Careful investigation has shown it to be an interpolation, and it is excised by nearly all editors.

The eon here of which they are speaking is the kingdom eon, that pre-advent time of divine government that prepares mankind for the personal presence of Jesus Christ. All the divine actions of the kingdom of God consummate in the parousia. There can really be no doubt but that the word *sunteleia* means a coming together of all the actions and operations that are moving toward a desired goal or end. This is why the word *consummation* is used to translate it. The word here is not *telos*, the actual end; but *sunteleia*, the act of completing to produce a desired goal or end.

There is nothing in the disciples question about the "coming" of Christ. How could there be when He was then present with them? Their question concerns the sign (singular) of His parousia, and this is defined by them as being "the consummation of the eon."

In answer to their question the Lord begins with a warning saying: "**Take heed lest anyone mislead you**" (24:4). This admonishment was given because the parousia of the Lord Jesus will not become a reality without a great struggle of deception and opposition on the part of Satan and his cohorts. He will well know that the time of his casting out is drawing near and his wrath is arising because he knows he has but a short time. See Revelation 12: 12. The development and the outcome of this fierce struggle is set forth in the balance of Matthew 24.

The Lord declares to them that many shall come in His name (that is, in His character) saying, "I am the Messiah" and many shall be deceived by them. However, not one of them shall be able to produce "**the sign of the Son of man in heaven**" (24:30), a sign which no one now knows and will not know until it appears, but when it does appear the wise and prudent will recognize it and know and understand that the Lord Jesus has left His place in heaven and is on His way to the earth for a parousia that will last for a thousand years. Could this sign be a complete replay of the vision Ezekiel saw and recorded in chapter one of this prophecy? It could very well be. How thrilling it would be to stand with our Bibles open and see this great drama played out in the skies and every detail following the script to the very letter. I, for one, will gladly go through the great tribulation just to see this.

The Lord Jesus told them further that there would be battles and reports of battles (not wars), nations arising against nations and governments against governments, also that there would be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places. These He

declares are "the beginning of sorrows," a statement that has no meaning unless there has been a complete absence of all such calamities for a long period of time. All these things have been happening and been prominent upon the earth ever since the entrance of sin. They were happening when the Lord spoke these words and have been commonplace ever since.

Thus, it is most illogical for men to cry "signs of the times", "the beginning of the great tribulation," "Armageddon is coming", every time a war, famine, earthquake, or pestilence occurs. Let us be done once and for all with this "Chicken Little" attitude.

When we understand the prophesied flow of events set forth in the definite time periods of the New Testament (See Issue No. **SB023** and Issue No. **SB129**) we will realize that all such things as false messiahs, false apostles, hot and cold wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes have ceased under the long period of God's benevolent government of the earth, a government of the Lord Jesus from heaven which precedes the events of Matthew 24. The rigid restraints and swift punishments that will characterize His rule (Psa. 67:4) will keep all such things from happening. But when in God's time and purpose these restraints and the Restrainer Himself (God's Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way (See Issues No. **SB113** and **SB114**) evil men and conditions will appear and these will be highly significant.

It is my firm conviction that the ninth verse of this portion will never be acted out until after the twelve apostles have been raised from the dead and have reigned long as judges upon the twelve thrones promised to them by the Lord (Matt. 19:28), Those who rebel against God's government will center their hatred on these twelve men, who will find safety in taking God at His word and fleeing to the mountains when they see the supreme sinful act of the "**abomination of desolation**," of which Daniel speaks.

Only in their mountain refuge will they be safe. So if while there anyone comes and says "**Lo, here is Christ or there**" they are not to believe it. If any say He has appeared and is in the desert; they are not to believe it, if any say He has returned and is in a secret room in Jerusalem, they are not even to listen to him. Following this He says: "**For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the parousia of the Son of man be**" (24:27).

From these words of our Lord we know of a certainty that His parousia and the coming that produces it will be sudden, dramatic, and public. The idea of a secret coming or of a secret personal presence is unknown to the Word of God. Neither can such be found in 1 Thess. 4:14-17. In this passage Paul declares that **those who are alive and remain unto the parousia of the Lord shall not precede those who are dead**. These dead are the martyrs of the revolt against the kingdom, first seen in Matt.24:9.

He further declares: "**The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**"

There is nothing secret about this, and it is plain He is not coming to take saints to heaven. He is coming to be on earth in a one-thousand year parousia. Those who are caught up simply go forth to meet Him, and they will return with Him to be present with Him throughout His parousia. My prayer is that all who name His name shall so live that when He is made manifest we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him in His parousia.

**End Issue No. SB133**