

PAROUSIA WELL DEFINED

The Sabbath Advocate, in an article opposing our views relative to the personal presence of Jesus unseen, during the "harvest" or end of this age, in a recent issue said:

"Some try to make it appear against our view of the personal coming of Christ by saying that the Greek word from which the word coming is translated is parousia, which means presence, and is sometimes so rendered, even in the common version. But this is an extraneous or overdone effort, for when the word parousia is used with reference to the Saviour's coming it has the understood meaning of presence after having come; so when the coming of Christ is expressed by the word parousia, it means his presence after his having come; so it implies his personal and actual coming first in order to have his presence."

We admire the candor of the above statement. We could not ask to have it better stated. The writer admits our claim that parousia signifies presence, and always so when used in connection with Jesus' second coming. But he evidently thinks that he quite overthrows our argument when he says: "It means his PRESENCE after having come." Why, brother, that is what presence always means; it is for this reason that we insist that the word coming is an improper translation of the Greek word parousia. Coming signifies an incomplete action – if Jesus is coming then he has not arrived; if he has arrived he cannot longer be said to be coming, but to be present; hence the force and importance attaching to the word parousia. The difficulty and hindrance of many in the appreciation of this word lies in their preconceived idea that presence always implies physical sight. Suppose your room were filled with gas; as you enter, your physical sight could discern nothing, but the presence of the gas would become

known to you by the sense of smell. You might discern the presence of a friend by the sense of hearing, though entirely deprived of the sense of sight; or you might know of his presence if informed by good authority in which you have confidence or faith.

Jesus manifests his presence now, to some of us; not to our natural organs of sight, hearing or smelling, but to the spiritual eye and ear of faith. God speaks to us through His Word about our Lord's presence, just as he tells us about all other spiritual things. If we have the hearing of faith, and walk by faith and not by sight, we may know of the Lord's presence thus, just as surely as we can know of the crown of life promised. If we have the eye of faith we can look about us and see the very things now transpiring which God's Word assures us will take place in the presence of the Son of Man. Thus, by two lines of proof, we may know: First, The positive statements of the prophets, and teachings of the Law shadows. Second, The fulfillment of things now as foretold would be in his presence. The character of this evidence proves also that only the faithful watchmen – the little flock – will be able to receive it, until he is revealed in judgments upon the nations.

Let us look at some of the texts in which parousia (presence) occurs, and let them speak for themselves: remembering, that as the "devil goeth about" "up and down on the earth," unseen during the Gospel Age, so the new Prince or ruler of the world will be present and active and unseen during the Millennial Age. Present as the angels have been during the Gospel Age – (Heb. 1:14) – yet like them also unseen and unseeable to the natural eye except by a miracle. The reason of this similarity between our Lord, angels and devils is, that they are spiritual beings and not human. Let us remember that though we have known Jesus after the flesh – as a man – yet now know him so no more, but as the perfected NEW CREATURE – the express

image of the Father's person, whom no man hath seen nor can see. Heb. 1:3 and 1 Tim. 6:16.

One illustration of presence and power, manifest only by effects, is Electricity. It is present in that telegraph wire, and carries a message with rapidity and force. Your eye sees nothing, but put forth your hand, touch the wire, interrupt its course, and you will know of its presence and power. Again, the same invisible fluid, brought into contact with a "carbon" produces an "Electric light." Again, the same invisible electric fluid unbridled in the clouds, we call lightning because, under certain circumstances, it produces a flash of light. It is there present, and is the same fluid, and has the same latent force before the flash indicated its presence and demonstrated its power.

This is one of the illustrations used by our Lord to bring us to understand how he will be present in the end of the Gospel Age. He says (Matt. 24:27) that if any shall attempt to define a location, and say he is here in such a house, or in yonder desert, believe it not. He will come in no such way – but "as the lightning ...so shall also the presence (parousia) of the Son of Man be." Not – he will come like the lightning, but he will be like the lightning after he has arrived and is present. Luke 17:24 puts it yet more forcibly, saying: "As the lightning that lighteneth" (it is the electric fluid that lighteneth or causes the flash; then let us read: "As the electric fluid which causes flashes of light)...so shall also the Son of Man BE in His day." He will be present in power and force, invisible, except as his judgments flashing out upon the corrupt systems of earth (State and Church) shall overturn and destroy them.

Thus, as we have heretofore pointed out, the Lord says he cometh with clouds – a great time of trouble. The governments of earth never saw so many black, heavy clouds. In every kingdom the rulers and the ruled are fast approaching open rupture, in which the storm will be clearly recognizable. The lightning force will be found against

the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12), bringing light and knowledge to the poor, degraded and often oppressed subjects, thus preparing them for the new Prince of the power of the air (spiritual power) – the Christ – and for a better earthly government under the rule of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets – raised to human perfection.

Already the light is flashing upon the waking ones in the church. They can see the light shining from the present Lord, making manifest various things which, during the darkness of this Gospel night, might have been before unnoticed – unfolding in a wonderful manner flash by flash the beauties of his Word. The clouds are gathering and the storm must soon burst, which shall, by its loud, crashing thunder awaken one by one the sleeping – those at ease in Zion. Thank God for that, even though they awake to find themselves in terror in the storm. The Millennial morn is already here, but it is early – not yet light except to the prospective waking, watching Bride, who receives the light of the Morning Star. (2 Peter 1:19; Rev. 22:16.) It will be some time before sunrise, and the weeping must endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. When the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings he will turn their mourning into dancing, and put off their sackcloth and gird them with gladness. Psa. 30.

Matt. 24:37 says: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the presence (parousia) of the Son of Man be." This informs us that we may expect here in the end of this age, [R349 : page 3] during the PRESENCE of Jesus, a similarity to Noah's time before the flood. Now, note closely and see what resemblance will exist. The clear statement is, that as in Noah's day, the people did not know of the coming flood, and did not believe in such a thing, so when our Lord is present they will not know and will not be aware of the impending deluge of trouble. As then they knew not, but attended to the ordinary

affairs of life, so here and now, people know not of Christ's presence. They complain of us for arousing the slumbering church by saying that Jesus is here, and that the testing and trial is now begun at the house of God, and that the nominal, sectarian institutions are even now spued from his mouth (Rev. 3:16), and the true children of God called out. The parallel passage in Luke (17:26) says: "As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days (in the presence) of the Son of Man."

Do we find that with the brighter shining truth our hearts are being established – our faith well founded and settled? If so, it is just what Paul expected. He wrote to the end that our hearts might be established "unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father at the PRESENCE (parousia) of our Lord." 1 Thes. 3:13.

Peter tells us of some who, at the present time, would deny that there is such a promise as we have just pointed out, viz.: that Jesus would be present while all things would continue as they were – the World eating, drinking, planting, etc., unconscious of his presence. He says: "There shall come in the last days [of this age] scoffers walking after their own lusts [desires – plans] and saying, Where is the promise of his presence? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 2 Peter 3:4. Thus we see that there must needs be just such scoffing in the days of Jesus as was in the days of Noah. Ye overcoming, covenant-keeping saints, lift up your heads, your redemption draweth nigh. At his presence he first inspects his household and rewards his faithful, saying: Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; and then he chastises his enemies. The inspection is now in progress; soon the new rulers will be made manifest, shining forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father. Brother, sister, seek with all diligence to make your election sure. Study to show thyself approved unto God, and be not only a student, but a doer of his will.