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THE PAROUSIA, OF CHRIST

In the last edition, we saw that there are three Greek words in the scriptures to show three distinct time periods in the Second Advent of Christ. These are Parousia, Epiphaneia and Basilea. In this edition, we will be looking closely at the Parousia in order to understand this first time period of the Second Advent.

We begin by saying again that the Bible is a prophetic book. It is given to reveal Christ (the Lord Jesus Christ in his redemptive work), to make known the body of Christ, the church, to reveal the kingdom of Christ (also called the kingdom of heaven), and to show all events that are to be associated with these.

The forty writers of scriptures employ in their writings so many symbols and figurative expressions or what we might call spiritual imageries. And these prophetic symbols and imageries must be understood in order for us to get at the message of God's word. Much of the ignorance we see in today's visible church systems is because time is not taken to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn from God's word the meaning of certain prophetic symbols. And because quite often, these symbols are taken literally, God's message is lost upon His people.

The orthodox churches appear more concerned with details in certain matters. And so, whatever season there is of their spiritual calendar, certain services and ceremonies are performed in harmony with that season. So they have the lent period, the epiphany, they celebrate Pentecost and all of these things. And even though the light is blurred, but at least, an effort is made to see that there are different activities God has lined up for the church. If the early church gave time and attention to details in relation to things that pertain to their redemption, then we upon whom the end of the age has come cannot afford to be ignorant of great issues that belong to our time.

So, turn with me to Matthew 26:59-66, our emphasis will be on verse 64. We are seeking to see in the light of this scripture how a passage sprinkled with figurative expression open up to a proper understanding only when the meaning of the figure are known.

⁵⁹Now the chief priests and elders and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death ⁶⁰But found none: yea though many false witnesses came, Yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses. ⁶¹And said, this fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. ⁶²And the high priest arose, and said unto him, answeredst thou nothing? What is it, which these witness against thee? ⁶³But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said to him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ, the Son of God ⁶⁴Jesus saith unto him. Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you.

Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. ⁶⁵Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying he hath Spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witness? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶What think ye? They answered and said He is guilty of death.

Now, let us look again at words in the sixty-fourth verse. It reads, "Nevertheless, I say unto you, henceforth shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven". How may we understand these words: "sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven"? Where is power? What does it mean to come in the clouds of heaven?

We know that when there are troubles, tribulations, afflictions, confusion, anarchy, war, distress, disorder etc, among a people, it can be said that there are dark or ominous clouds that have engulfed the land. That, of course, does not mean that if you are to go out and look up into the sky, you will see certain dark clouds engulfing the sky, but that there is season of trouble that has come upon the land.

So, the word "ominous clouds" is a figurative expression and sums up the atmosphere of fear, feelings of apprehension and in security.

Now, Jesus in the passage we read was talking to his accusers and was saying unto them, as it were, " this day is as a day of great weakness. I am bound with chains, I will soon be killed. It is as it were your day of power and my day of weakness, but hereafter, you shall see me seated in glory...". The other synoptic gospels say, " ... You shall see me seated at the right hand of majesty, at the right hand of the throne of God". So here in Matthew 24-26 Jesus was talking about his exaltation to divine glory.

But the question may be asked, how were the listeners to see him seated in glory? The answer is that they were to see the evidence that the same Jesus who they killed is not destroyed forever, but is risen and exalted when they see the activities that reveal his glory and power in the ministry of his disciples. In Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33) he drew attention to the fact, that Christ was seated in glory and the proof of it was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When the early church went forth with signs and wonders after the outpouring of the Spirit of the exalted Christ upon them, the whole of the nation of Israel was moved. They knew straightaway that some thing glorious must have happened to Jesus, that they had not really gotten rid of him in his dying.

But then, the church went forth ministering for a period of about thirty-six years before the second part of the prophecy in Matthew 26:64 was fulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ had said they shall not only see him seated on the right hand of power, but shall also see him coming in the clouds of heaven bringing divine judgement upon them: That event did not happen until AD 70.

In AD 70, the Roman soldiers came under the command of Titus, and sacked the whole nation, At first, true to the prophecies of the Lord in Luke 21:20, the Roman armies under Cestius Gallus came against Jerusalem in 66 AD, four years before the destruction of AD 70. A siege was on the City. But strange enough, Cestius Gallus did not press the siege to its completion; he suddenly retired from the city without any reason whatsoever. Thus, the Disciples of Christ having understood on earlier prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 23) followed the divine counsel to flee the city.

Less than four years later, in AD 70, the Roman the under Titus returned and encircled Jerusalem. They cut down trees for miles around and built a city-encircling wall, a fortification with pointed stakes. All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews. After a siege of about five months, the city was destroyed. So thorough was the destruction that it was said that there was left nothing to make those who came to the place believe the city had ever been inhabited. According to secular history about 1,000,000 Jews died

during the siege, and 97,000 were taken captive. For that nation, it was the terrible beginning of a tribulation, such as they had never witnessed before.

So the clouds of heaven the Lord was speaking about by means of which he was to come upon the generation of Jews that crucified him are nothing else but the event of the destruction of Jerusalem. They are said to be clouds of heaven because those events were sourced in the God of heaven. They were no chance events. The overthrow of the Jewish nation was actually an act of divine judgement. From the foregoing one cannot take this passage (Matthew 26:64) in a literal way. Neither is the coming referred to in the passage a reference to the coming of the Lord in His second advent. But the passage shows to us the same principle we began with in the last edition that that the Lord Jesus Christ has been coming (and keeps coming) to the world of mankind ever since the fall of Adam working salvation in all the earth. David said, The Lord is my king of old, working salvation in all the earth.

That brings us to Hebrews 10. We read this chapter to begin our meditation in the last edition, and we want to draw your attention again (for emphasis) to these two distinct aspects in scriptures concerning "the coming of the Lord". The first is that which has happened thousands upon thousands of times from the time of Adam and which will continue to happen until redemption is complete and human history is given a lift and the human race (the willing hearted among the human race) is fully reconciled to God. That aspect of the Lord's coming must be clearly seen and distinguished from His coming in the first and second advents.

So, we read Hebrews 10:37

³⁷For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come

and will not tarry

Reading the passage in a slightly expanded form, it says, for a little while and the coming one shall come. The "Coming One" is the redemptive title that the Lord Jesus Christ takes upon himself revealing the fact that he is the One that has been behind all the manifestations of God's power and glory in the earth, visiting humanity and manifesting such great judgements that have been used to call nations back to their senses.

So, we are told that the coming One shall come. But why is there any need to say that the coming One shall come since he keeps coming? The reference is to the Second Advent, a coming of the Lord just as distinct as was the first advent.

So, there are two great dispensations, in which the coming One reinforces his activities in a very special way. The first of these two great dispensations is the first advent, when the

Logos took on humanity and dwelt amongst men. There were certain things that he did in the days of his flesh that could not have been possible for him to do in those series of appearances in which he manifested His presence to men before the first advent. So, the first advent had its place in the plan and purposes of God.

But there is a Second Advent, which like the first covers a time period. And in relation to this, we are told in Hebrews 10 that the coming One shall come and shall not tarry. We have seen earlier that the Lord Jesus Christ can never take on humanity again. He took it to lay it down and in his resurrection, he was taken back to the divine glory. The fact of a Second Advent does not imply the Lord will again take on human flesh. It only means: that it has been divinely arranged that that same Jesus who was preached

before unto us shall come again to bring us into fullness of redemption that we might be eternally associated with him (Acts 3:20). But when he comes in that Second Advent He comes as He now is not as he was in his first advent. We are going to see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

So, we want to look at the first time period in the Second Advent of Christ (the Parousia), distinguishing it from the second time period (the Epiphaneia), which in turn will be distinguished from the third time period (called the Basilea).

So, we turn to Matthew 24. Our purpose is to gather such scriptures as relate to the Parousia, separating them for study and differentiating them from other set of passages that show us the work of Christ in the Epiphaneia, and further differentiating these from those that reveal the activities of the Christ in the Basilea

In Matthew 24:3 and 37, we find the word Parousia used in relation to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

³*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of the coming and of the end of the world.*

The word "coming" is the Greek word "Parousia" which is best translated as presence and not "coming" as rendered in the King James Version. Thus, reading verse 3 again, it says, tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy presence and of the end of the age. Reading from verse 37 of the same chapter to verse 1 of the next chapter (i.e. Matthew 25), we will be able to see the characteristics of the time period called the Parousia and what Christ begins to do among his people and in the earth at that time.

³⁷*But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

Again, the word coming here is Parousia, which means presence. Christ will be present among his people in a very special way carrying out certain activities which will prepare them for his unveiling in the Epiphaneia. When he comes with power and great glory, seen and associated with by the overcoming church, who being delivered from their sins and filled with the fullness of Christ relate to him as the bride. Verse 38

³⁸*For as in the day that were before the flood...*

So, the question may be asked, what were the days of Noah referred to in verse 37? The answer is that "the days of Noah" were the days before the flood. Noah ministered one hundred and twenty years before the flood came. And that whole time period, particularly the time he began to emphasise that judgement was coming upon the earth and he began to build the ark, those days, spanning several years (about three generations) in which Noah was preaching the gospel of divine judgement answers to the days of Noah, the days before the flood. So, we read verse 38 again, along with verse 39

³⁸For in the days that were before the flood, they were Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark ³⁹And knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming (parousia) of the son of man be.

So, the Lord will be present among his people carrying out certain works in His church unknown by the world. And, in the passage of time, according to verse 27, His activities among his people will become evident in the church world.

It is with great rejoicing to say that we know hundreds of people in this nation who have delivered themselves from the unfaithfulness of the times and are preaching the word of the kingdom, living humble lives, fending for themselves, having a passion for God's glory, ministering to the church calling her to repentance, involving themselves also in repentance, seeking the Lord for the outpouring of more and more of his glory, studying the scriptures and rejoicing to see Christ reveal himself to them in a special way.

Hundreds of people in this nation, including persons who were formerly ministers of the gospels in the visible church systems, scattered all over the country in up to a hundred local congregations, are persons who are delivering themselves from the shame of what we see in the church world today. We read on from verse 40 straight to verse 1 of Matthew 25.

⁴⁰Then shall two be in the field the one shall be taken, and The other left. ⁴¹Two women shall be grinding in the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴²Watch therefore for you know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³But know this that if the good man of the house had Know in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered hi house to be broken up. ⁴⁴Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. ⁴⁵Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. ⁴⁷Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods ⁴⁸but and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming. ⁴⁹And he shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; ⁵⁰The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him; and in and in an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ^{25:1}Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

So, you can see the series of activities the Lord will be carrying out among His own people. He judges among his servants, raises up the measurably faithful bringing them to a closer walk with him and making himself more known to them. And, with time, there is an emergence of a spiritual movement of the Lord's people in accordance with Matthew 25:1

Since we will be going into much details concerning this in other editions, we will pass on to take another reading that shows Christ activities among His people in the time of the Parousia. Malachi 3:1-3

¹Behold I will send my messenger; and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple...

There is a coming of the Lord to his temple. His temple is his church, the spiritual house made of lively stones. These lively stones are spirit-filled believers. So, He will come to His own, He will come to His church to carry out a work.

¹...and the Lord whom ye seek shall come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. ²But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. ³And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

So, the Lord comes into His temple, to prepare His own for full redemption. He purges his servants; he purges the church, and leads the faithful and obedient to a greater knowledge of him. The closing part of verse 3 tells us one reason why he does that. It is that they may offer unto him an offering in righteousness. That means that they might serve him with greater faithfulness.

In verses 4 and 5 of the next chapter (Malachi 4), we are shown these same activities of the Lord among His people, with emphasis on the restoration of truth, of life, and of practices that agree with the truth of God's word as He originally gave it to the church through the apostles. And we are told that these activities of the Lord among His own will take place in the time of the Parousia, before the Epiphanea, the great and dreadful day of the Lord. So, let us read Malachi 4:5,6.

⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord...

The great and dreadful day of the Lord refers to the Epiphany. It is great because the faithful church will be brought to greatness at that time. It is dreadful because God will visit great judgements upon the unfaithful church systems and upon the civil states, preparatory to taking over the kingdoms of this world, as it is written, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ (Revelation 11: 15)

So, the Lord says "behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord". Of course, we know that John the Baptist was an Elijah ministering during the time of the first advent of Christ, preparing the way before him (the Messiah). There was a great and dreadful day that was to come upon the nation of Israel, which was to completely wound up the Jewish age. That dreadful day of tribulation was consummated in AD 69/70 when the Roman armies utterly destroy the nation.

But before that time, the Lord came to the covenant people of Israel to prepare the faithful to escape that tribulation and to stand approved before the son of man. And heralding His presence, preparing the hearts of the people to receive and submit to the message of the Kingdom and the work of cleansing the Lord came to reveal was the ministry of John the Baptist. Thus the ministry of John was a fulfilment of this provision in relation to the first advent.

But from the words of the Lord in Matthew 17:11, we know that there is to be yet another fulfilment of this scripture in relation to the Second Advent. Just like the Lord send an Elijah ministry to prepare the way before him in his first advent; there is an Elijah ministry that the Lord raises up during the time of his Second Advent.

In a sense, we can say that at the time of the Second Advent, the Lord himself is the greater Elijah who comes to restore all things (Acts 3:21). He combines in himself the ministry of Elijah and the Ministry of the Messenger of the covenant revealing two aspects of the work he comes to fulfil in His church. But, he fulfils the Elijah ministry through a many membered body of servants whom he raises up unto himself at this auspicious time. They go forth with the sound of the trumpet to gather together his elect from the four winds of the heavens, preparing them to receive from the Lord that further work of perfection and glorification promised the church.

Thus, while during the first advent, the Elijah ministry was fulfilled in one man, John the Baptist, at the time of his Second Advent; the Elijah ministry is fulfilled in a many membered body. Not one man but many persons. Yes not one prophet coming as a great one whom all must hear and worship, but many anointed servants of God having the duty under Christ to prepare his people for the epiphany. In verse 6 of Malachi 4, it is said of this Elijah, and he shall turn the hearts of the father to the children and the hearts of the children to their father lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

In closing, we will read one scripture on the epiphany of Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 – 10

³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth. ⁴So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and tribulations that ye endure, ⁵Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgments of God that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer. ⁶Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. ⁷And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel our Lord Jesus Christ ⁹who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, ¹⁰When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in the day.

Notice that verse 10 indicates that in the epiphany, Christ will be glorified in his saints and be admired in all them that believe (i.e. the overcoming church). That means there will be nothing in the saints that do not reflect his will and mind. There will be moral perfection, glory, honour and immortality. But we know that that is not the condition of the church today. The Parousia is given in order to make possible for the church to be cleansed, beautified and filled with glory at his appearing, his epiphany. May the good Lord cause us to have a portion among them that are being thus sanctified, in Jesus name. Amen.

