
**HERMENEUTICAL STUDY OF ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑ AND ITS
SIGNIFICANCE TO THE 21ST CENTURY CHRISTIANS**

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The Old Testament furnishes its readers with two pictures of Christ's coming: his coming to earth as a servant in glorious apparel and his coming to earth as a king in glorious apparel. This has brought about bewilderment both to the Jews who expected only the kingly and glorious Christ and the 21st century Christian who are being misled by some preachers and teachers of the Gospel of Christ. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to unearth two forms of Christ's second coming: (1) a secret coming – as a thief in the night, and (2) public, universal coming, when every eye shall see him. Therefore through lexico-semantic analysis which reveals, its root-words and word-stems and the various possible semantic categories created by the human mind, this paper claims that the secret coming of Christ is what is called the rapture and the public coming is called the παρουσία. It conveys the idea that Christ's return will be a definite and decisive action on his part. He will come himself, as surely as he came in the incarnation.

Keywords: *Παρουσία, Nature, Timing, Place, Significance*

ABSTRAK

Perjanjian Lama melengkapi pembacanya dengan dua gambaran tentang kedatangan Kristus: kedatangannya ke dunia sebagai seorang hamba dalam pakaian yang mulia dan kedatangannya ke bumi sebagai seorang raja dengan pakaian yang mulia. Hal ini telah menimbulkan kebingungan baik bagi orang-orang Yahudi yang hanya mengharapkan Kristus yang raja dan mulia dan orang Kristen abad ke-21 yang disesatkan oleh beberapa pengkhotbah dan guru Injil Kristus. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari makalah ini adalah untuk mengungkap dua bentuk kedatangan Kristus yang kedua kali: (1) kedatangan rahasia-sebagai pencuri di malam hari, dan (2) kedatangan umum dan universal, ketika setiap mata melihatnya. Oleh karena itu, melalui analisis leksiko-semantik yang mengungkapkan akar kata dan kata imbuhan serta berbagai kategori semantik yang mungkin diciptakan oleh pikiran manusia, tulisan ini mengklaim bahwa rahasia kedatangan Kristus adalah apa yang disebut pengangkatan dan kedatangan publik disebut yang παρουσία. Ini menyampaikan gagasan bahwa kedatangan kembali Kristus

akan menjadi tindakan yang pasti dan tegas di pihaknya. Dia akan datang sendiri, sama seperti dia datang dalam inkarnasi.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Παρουσία, Sifat, Waktu, Tempat, Signifikansi*

Introduction

The word *παρουσία*, Parousia is one of the Anglicized Greek words; that is, a Greek word that has been brought over into the English Language, without any change in its spelling. *Παρουσία*, that is, the second coming of Jesus into the world has been and will continue to be a subject of serious debate among scholars due to the fact that both Jesus Christ and Paul presented the subject as if it was proximate. Though the word *παρουσία* is not an Old Testament term, it is a Greek word that was brought into primitive Christianity by Apostle Paul to describe the OT concept of the Day of the Lord (Oepeke 1985, 861). The word *παρουσία* occurs in the New Testament twenty-four times, four times in Matthew 24 and the others in the Epistles: eleven are in the authentic Pauline letters; it occurs three times in 2 Thessalonians 2, and six times in the Catholic Epistles. In the genuine Pauline letters, except in 2 Cor.10:10, it is always part of a prepositional phrase (Balz and Schneider 1994, 43).

Παρουσία denotes, a presence, *παρά*, with and *ουσία*, being (from *εμι*, to be), it denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with. The Greek *παρέμι* covers both the present tense idea of “being there” and the perfect idea of “having come.” *Παρουσία* means, therefore, both presence or (in a more neutral sense) property, fortune, military strength; and arrival, someone’s coming to be present. In its Hellenistic usage, the word *Παρουσία* assumes two important meanings. First, it is a technical term: technically, the noun was used for the arrival of a king, emperor, or ruler or of the gods with honor to help people in need (Malherbe 2000, 272). Oepke, submits that “...on the occasion of such visits, there are flattery speeches, delicacies to eat, asses for the baggage, street improvements and wreaths or gifts of money” (Oepke 1985, 791). Such a *παρουσία* is not thought of merely as a future but is experienced as a reality in the present. Second, Parousia is also used to describe the helpful appearance of the gods. Olagunju also writes “...*Παρουσία* was derived from Pagan Greek usage of the ceremonial arrival of a king or ruler with honor or a god to help people in need” (Olagunju, 2017). Josephus uses *παρουσία* to mean the presence of God in the Shekinah, which is revealed to his people and even to the pagan governor, Petronius (Verbrugge 2000, 440-441). According to Bruce when Christians speak of the *Παρουσία* of the Lord, they probably think of the pomp and circumstance attending those imperial visits as parodies of the true glory to

be revealed (Bruce 1982, 57).

In the words of Dummelow, The hope of the return of Christ is found in the entire New Testament (Matt.16:27; 25:31; MK. 8:38; Lk. 12:40; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:10; Rev. 1:7). The New Testament term for this return is *Παρουσία* which literally means presence. A prominent element in the teaching of Jesus Christ is the idea of the *Παρουσία* as a definite event that would end the present age and inaugurate the age to come. It is however impossible to imagine how the *Παρουσία* will be, but it could be said that the present age will be ended by some great manifestations of the presence and power of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has therefore urged men to be watchful, not merely to be ready should the end come in their day but also that they may welcome every fresh manifestation of his presence and power in the movements of history (Lk. 18:8) (Dummelow 1950, 34).

Vine is of the view that *παρουσία* is used to describe the presence of Christ with His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16). When used of the return of Christ, at the Rapture of the church, it signifies, not merely His momentary coming for His saints, but His presence with them from that moment until His revelation and manifestation to the world (Vine 1985, 22). According to Leith, the heart of biblical teaching and the climactic event of biblical verity is the glorious appearing of the Lord, the Second Coming, when Christ returns to judge the world and to vindicate both His dead and living elect. The common creed of Western Christianity, the Apostles' Creed (c. 700), states that Jesus Christ "rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead" (Leith 1977, 24). In the word of Erickson, Orthodox theologians agree on this doctrine. It is the basis of the Christian's hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God's plan (Erickson 1985, 1186). This high evaluation of the Second Advent or *παρουσία* of Christ is justified in the light of Paul's inspired declarations: "He, God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Milne further adds that Jesus Himself sees the climax in these terms: 'At that time men will see the son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory' (Mark 13:26). The *παρουσία* is the commonest term used in the Greek New Testament for the Second Advent (Matt. 24:3; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8) (Milne 2007, 312). It is a theological concept that comes from the Greek word *παρουσία*, meaning "coming", "arrival" or "presence." In the study of Bible prophecy, the term *παρουσία* is used about the Coming of Jesus Christ. It

conveys the idea that the Lords, a return will be a definite and decisive action on his part. He will come himself, as surely as he came in the incarnation. It will be a return of a king (Luke 19:12) (Milne, 313). There are other related words like *ἀποκάλυψις* meaning 'revelation' (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7). The lord's coming will reveal who he is and what the world is. It will be a time for things which are now hidden to come to light, and *ἐπιφάνεια* meaning 'appearing' or 'manifestation' (2 Thess. 2:8; Tit. 2:13). It carries the idea of drawing back a veil so that what is there already may be truly seen for what it is (Milne 313). Since the *παρουσία* is described in the Bible as an event, it is appropriate to raise the basic questions that pertain to an event, such as "how, when, and where?" These questions will provide the outlines for the structure of this research paper. "How?" has to do with the manner of the *παρουσία*, "When?" has to do with the timing of the *παρουσία*, and "where?" has to do with the place of the *παρουσία*.

The General Nature of Παρουσία

This answers the question of 'how will this *παρουσία* be?' It is well understood that if there is a second coming; it is suggestive of a first coming – that Christ had come before. The Old Testament furnishes its readers with two pictures of Christ's coming: his coming to earth as a servant in glorious apparel and his coming to earth as a king in glorious apparel. This has brought about bewilderment both to the Jews who expected only the kingly and glorious Christ and the 21st century Christians who are being misled by some preachers and teachers of the Gospel of Christ.

In the words of De Haan, the Gospels present to the readers of the scripture that the Old Testament prophecy about Christ's coming as a servant redeemer (Isaiah 53) has been fulfilled (Although some of the Jews did not recognize it) during the first coming of Christ, and that its aim has been actualized also in the – salvation of all mankind. The present confusion is on the nature of his second coming. How will it be or look like? Initially, there was little or no confusion, before the teachings of the Epistles came up, some passages of the Gospels are not exempt here. The Epistles and Gospels presented to us two forms of Christ's second coming: (1) a secret coming (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Tim. 1:10) – as a thief in the night, and (2) public, universal coming (Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:28; 2 Thess. 1:10) when every eye shall see him (De Haan 1969, 241-242).

Haan further adds that biblical scholars have solved or harmonized this by substantially separating the two comings presented by the Epistles and Gospels. The secret coming is what is called the rapture and the public coming is called the *παρουσία*. Undoubtedly, there are two phases of the second coming of Christ.

First, he will come for his church to take believers out before the tribulation (rapture). Then he will come again (about seven years later, corresponding to Daniel's seventieth week) at the end of the tribulation with his church to set up His kingdom upon the earth (*παρουσία*). The first event called the rapture is described in Revelation 4:1-3, and we read in Revelation 19:11 of the second event (De Haan, 241).

Haan also adds that the Old Testament prophets saw the glory of his public second coming only, and knew nothing about the secret coming in the rapture. The truth concerning the rapture is taught in the New Testament and was unknown in the Old. The reason for this is evident when one remembers that the rapture concerns the church, whereas the second coming is the time of Israel's deliverance. Hence in the Old Testament, when there was no church, there was no mention of the rapture though it was foreshadowed in type and the figure, but when one studies the New Testament, one finds many references of rapture, as well as *παρουσία* (De Haan, 242). But, this research is concerned about the second public coming (*παρουσία*).

Modern theology has frequently been too much inclined to deny the personal, visible return of our Lord, and to substitute instead, a belief in His spiritual presence only. However, the scripture clearly teaches that as Christ once came into the world to effect man's redemption, so also, He will come again to receive His redeemed church to Himself. The second coming will be personal, visible and glorious (Rev.1:7). His coming will not be merely to the eye of faith, but in the sight of heaven and earth- the terror of his foes and the consolation of His people. This is confirmed by the incident on the Mount of Ascension "And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Act 1:9-11) (Wiley and Culbertson 1946, 1092).

Even though the Bible answers profoundly the question of the nature of the second public coming both from the Old and New Testaments, but more evidence is seen in the testimony of the angels that appeared on the moment of Christ's ascension. Three things are vivid from the book of Acts 1:11, here:

1. Personal identity – 'this same Jesus'
2. Substantial literality – 'in like manner'
3. Physical visibility – 'every eye shall see him'

It then means that the Second Advent of Jesus Christ will be a universally evident event. (Matt. 24:27) a coming in power and glory (Matt. 24:30) to destroy Antichrist and evil (2 Thess. 2:8), to gather his people, living and dead (Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 2 Thess. 2:1) and to judge the world (Matt. 25:31; Jas. 5:9).

In the words of Douglas, His coming will also be an *ἀποκάλυψις* an 'unveiling' or 'disclosure', when the power and glory which are now his by his exaltation and heavenly session (Phil. 2:9; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 2:9) will be disclosed to the world. Christ's reign as Lord, now invisible to the world, will then be made visible by his *ἀποκάλυψις* (Douglas 1992, 345).

Packer J.L opines that numerous Old Testament passages speak of the glories of the Messianic kingdom and public, universal coming of Christ (2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 2:1-5; 9:6f; 11:1-10; 40:3-5; 49:6; 61:2; Jer. 33:15; Mi. 4:4-3; Dan. 7:13f). The New Testament repeatedly announces the savior's Second Advent will be personal and physical (Matt. 24:44; Acts 1:11; Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 4: 8; Heb. 9:28), visible and triumphant (Mk. 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 1:7)'... that Jesus Christ will one day be back, and that this will be his "glorious visit", his "appearing" and "coming". Christ will return to this world in glory (Packer 1993, 250).

The Timing of *Παρουσία*

The hope of the return of Christ has always been an important element in the Christian faith. But the question again is how soon? Three sayings have been interpreted to mean that Jesus expected his return in the immediate future. In Matthew 10, when he sent out the twelve disciples on their preaching mission in Galilee, one of the instructions was "you will not finish going through all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23 NIV). Schweitzer interpreted this to mean that Jesus expected his kingdom to come within a few days before the twelve had completed their mission in Galilee. He used this verse to mean that Jesus expected the mission of the twelve to create a great movement of repentance among Israel so that the eschatological kingdom would come before they had finished their mission (Schweitzer 1931, 359). A second saying appears in Matthew 16:28. Then Jesus said, "there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1NIV). Matthew renders it "before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (16:28). Luke simply puts it "before they see the kingdom" (Luke 9:27). In the Olivet discourse, there is the third saying. The three Gospels record the saying "this generation will not pass away before all these things have happened (Mark 13:30 and parallel). On the surface of it, from the literal perspectives, the last two sayings portray a bold affirmation of the

imminence of the παρουσία. The expectation was within a generation; thirty years or more when some of the disciples would still be alive.

In the Olivet discourse, the motif of delay is also salient. Jesus had taught that troubled times would come with wars and rumors of wars and pretenders would arise claiming to be the Messiah, but the end is not yet (Mark 13:7). That provides a necessary condition for preaching the gospels to all nations (Mark 13:10) portrays delay. The parable of the ten minas as recorded in Luke 19:11-26, reveals the delay motif. Delay is sounded in the parable of the importunate woman (Luke 18:1-8), the ten virgins. A note of delay is also heard in the saying "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it" (Ladd 1974, 207). The motif of uncertainty appears to be the strongest with regards to the παρουσία in the synoptic gospels. Jesus flatly affirmed that he did not know when the kingdom would come. (Mk. 13:32), "Take heed, watch for you do not know when the time will come (Mark 13:33, Mark 13:36).

Ladd posits that Matthew adds some Q material emphasizing the indefiniteness of the time and the need to watch (209). Matthew 24:36-42 states thus:

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

A note of warning is seen in Matthew 24: 44: "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him". Paul's usage of the term παρουσία signifying the coming of Christ from heaven is in three letters. These are I Thessalonians, where it is most prevalent (2:19,3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8-9, and I Corinthians 15:28). This is so because the situations Paul was addressing in the Thessalonians correspondence and in I Corinthians required him to speak at some length on matters about the Christological future (Witherington 1992, 153). In 1 and 2, Thessalonians Paul must correct some certain misunderstandings about future eschatology,

while in 1 Corinthians; Paul must correct an over-realized or over-spiritualize eschatology by settling over the eschatological future. The phrase Paul most frequently used to speak of Christ's return is the "Day of the Lord or the Day of Christ". The first reference to imminence is I Thessalonians 4: 15-17: According to Paul's own words:

We tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord, himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (NIV).

This text when read portrays Paul's imminent expectation of the *παρουσία*, within his lifetime. With regards to the tone of delay, Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 2: 3: "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction". The motif of uncertainty is revealed in I Thessalonians 5:1-3. Paul states thus:

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying "peace and safety", destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

These sayings by Jesus and Paul have been reflected in the synoptic gospels and Pauline Epistles reflect conflicting views with regards to the coming of Christ. The debate has been on-going amongst scholars with various positions taken. Some view the sayings of imminence as authentic and those of delay as words put by the church into the mouths of Jesus and for Paul a change of theology due to the non-fulfillment of the *παρουσία* at a time he was close to his death.

Balz and Schneider also posit that Jesus himself anticipated the imminent establishment of the kingdom of God, but the early church specifically anticipated his impending *παρουσία* based on the Easter experience and the possession of the Spirit (Balz and Schneider 1994, 45). Schweitzer postulates that from Matthew 10:23, Jesus realized that he had made a mistake – this was the first delay of the *παρουσία*. Now Jesus began to think that he had to bring in

the kingdom by his own suffering and death. But he was mistaken even in this, and so he died an utterly disillusioned man. He further argues, this in turn, is believed to have forced early Christians to wrestle with the problem of the delay of the return of the Son of Man and the delay of the end of history. Due to the imminent of Jesus and Paul, a sort of interim ethics was promulgated, that is, imperatives that would directly apply to all believers during the short time span left before the conclusion of human history. For this reason, it is believed that late-twentieth-century Christians cannot directly follow and apply these same ethical teachings of Jesus and Paul (Schweitzer, 358).

C. H. Dodd views Paul's sayings in his epistles to be contradictory and attributes this to the fact that Paul realized that he would not live to partake in the *παρουσία*. He states thus:

Paul in his first epistles to the Thessalonians; affirmed that we (meaning not himself, but the Thessalonians believers) would meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:17). In I Corinthians, written some seven years later, Paul expressed the conviction that he and at least some of his Corinthians converts would still be alive at the *παρουσία* (Dodd 1953, 115).

He further argues that after I Corinthians, however, Paul is no longer heard with this confident expectation. In 2 Corinthians, written shortly after I Corinthians, he expressed the thought he would probably die before the *παρουσία*. Dodd states thus: "In his later epistles, the thought of the imminent return fades away. The emphasis is now on ethical exhortations and our present participation in Christ, there is therefore a kind of transformation of eschatology into mysticism" (Dodd, 115). Oscar Cullman taught that, whereas in I Thessalonians 4:15, Paul had said that he would still be living when Christ returned, in later epistles (II Cor. 5:1ff and Philippians 1:23) he affirmed the *παρουσία* would occur only after his death (Dodd, 115). In discussing the development of Paul's thought, Schweitzer states rather boldly: "From his first letter to his last, Paul's thought is always dominated by the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus" (Schweitzer, 52). He argued using proof-texts, that Paul believed from first to last that the Lord would return immediately that is within Paul's lifetime or soon after and that this conditioned all his thinking and ethical advice. The debate has, however, not being one-sided, for many have come out to defend the sayings of Jesus Christ and Apostle Paul in the light of criticism and devalidation of their sayings

C. L. Mearns is of the view that the earliest eschatology of the church and Paul

was realized eschatology; future eschatology was developed because of the death of Christians and the need to correct enthusiasm (Mearns 1992, 157). However, Witherington opines that Paul's eschatological language manifests a rich variety and complexity, and as time went on he put less stress on future eschatology than he did in some of his earlier letters, for reasons that are not completely clear. This did not, however, amount to abandoning one form of eschatology for another as Romans 13 and Philippians 1 and 3 make clear. He states that:

As Paul moved closer to his death and this was likely to come before the Parousia he quite naturally reflected more on life in heaven with the Lord. This increased focus on vertical eschatology is evident in those letters where his death may have seemed rather near (2 Corinthians and Philippians) (Witherington,154).

Mbiti not only helps to capture the difference between Western and African accounts of eschatology; he also shows how some aspects of the African conception are closer to the biblical version of eschatology than those accounts sponsored by a western-missionary. Mbiti provides a way out by proposing that the solution lies with the view of time and history operative in the African setting and the European Setting. Based on his native, Kamba Society, Mbiti posits that in Africa, unlike the Western view, time is considered a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a dynamic present (Mbiti 1970, 24) and a very limited or non-existent future. In furtherance, among Africans, time is not 'mechanical'. It is, rather, a succession of events that move not into the future, but "backward", so to speak, into the past, which is the center of gravity. For Africans, Mbiti states that:

History, therefore, does not move toward a goal in the future, but instead points to the past, wherein lies the root of existence: the origin of the world, the creation of humans, the formation of customs and traditions, and the coming into being of the structure of the world (Mbiti, 25). Mbiti in furtherance says that the Linear Concept of time found in Western thought with a long past, present and indefinite future is foreign to the African conceptual scheme.

Dyrness discussions on the implication of the two-dimensional concept of time on Eschatology in which *παρουσία* is an essential part reveals that there is a dynamic present; a sacred Universe, and a deep source of hope. Therein lies the basis for the use of the language of imminence. It was not a language of certainty, but one of hope. I Thessalonians 5:1-2, reveals that Paul was not certain of the day of the *παρουσία*. The futuristic perspective comes with certainty. When an event is viewed with the futuristic concept, it

makes for complacency, it does not call for watchfulness and preparedness. Imminence calls for alertness, watchfulness and makes one prepared. It is an apocalyptic language that calls for alertness (Dyrness 2008, 41).

The futuristic language takes away the fear of the imminent occurrence of an event; so the need for one to be alert and watchful will no longer be there. Since the *παρουσία* is viewed both as a glorious event for those who are righteous and a day of judgment for oppressors and the wicked. The most appropriate language for its expression is the language of Imminence and Uncertainty. Whatever is said with certainty takes away its unexpected occurrence. The “delay” to the African who does not have a three-dimensional or linear concept of time, but has the consciousness of living his life within the limits of an imminent occurrence of “the day of the Lord” is uncalled for. The African has hope, faith in the ability of the Almighty God to intervene in his situation. The language of a “future occurrence” takes away that “hope” and faith in God. In other words, from the African perspective, the attempt to reconcile the tension between imminence and delay of the *παρουσία* was made through an understanding of the concept of time from the African background.

Apart from the biblical views about *παρουσία*, there are many different theories or views on the timing of the second coming of Christ - *παρουσία*, held by different denominations and biblical scholars. They are:

1. Spiritual theory: According to McDearmid, this theory teaches that Christ came to the earth the second time on the day of Pentecost (McDearmid 1980, 65). McDearmid, cited T. J. Wheldon, says:

He (Christ) would possess them by the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit take them unto Himself...the coming of the Spirit is the coming of Christ. The father was in the Son essentially, so that the son was more than His representative; neither is the Spirit merely a representative of Christ. The coming of the Spirit fulfills Christ's own promise: “I am with you always” (McDearmid 1980, 216).

The above statement contains an element of truth, for John 14: 23, as well as verses 16-17, Christ does promise to come with the father to dwell with the believer. This has been fulfilled at Pentecost. Verse 18 is a definite promise to return to his disciples. It was fulfilled after His resurrection. But John 14:1-3 contains a definite promise to take the believer to His father's home. This is still the future. The weakness of

the Spiritual theory is that it fails to distinguish the indwelling Spirit of Christ, the promise in John 14:23, from Christ's promise to return to earth at his second coming. After having received the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke of Christ's coming at the future (Acts 3:20-21). Well after the day of Pentecost, this was still spoken of as being future (1 Thess. 3:13). Furthermore, the Spiritual theory fails to account for events of the predicted second coming that have not been fulfilled – such as the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:32), and the setting up of Christ's kingdom (Rev. 20:4).

2. **The Judgment theory:** the judgment theory is also known as preterism. According to Merrill, the theory teaches that the destruction of Jerusalem marked the return of Christ. That is, the position associates the second coming of Christ with “1st-century events – such as the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in B. C. E 70”. Some of the adherents of this theory see this ‘coming of the son of man in glory’ primarily fulfilled in Jesus’ death on the cross. Matthew 24:1-31 is the passage that is basically used to support judgment theory or preterism. They believe the apocalyptic (which includes ‘the sun turning black’, the ‘powers... will be shaken’ and ‘earthquake’) is already fulfilled (Merrill 1994, 137). Merrill is of the view that this theory represents postmillennialism. Since Revelation 22:7, 12, and 20 was written about 25 years after the destruction of Jerusalem in B. C. E 70 which nullifies the judgment theory of the timing of the second coming of Christ. Again, this position ignores 2 Peter 3:10: and Matthew 24:30: “then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” ((Merrill 1994, 138).
3. **Secret-coming theory:** the Watch Tower Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses) uses this theory. In the words of Mcdearmid, Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that Christ returned to the earth in 1874 and is hidden away. They say He is now at work, secretly setting up His kingdom. They hold onto Matthew 24:26 (RSV) that says: “If they say to you, ‘lo, he is in the wilderness’, do not go out; if they say, ‘lo, he is in inner rooms’, do not believe it”. This theory holds no water. First, there is no biblical corroboration. Second, the passage of corroboration was chosen out of context, although the researcher agrees with their interpretation of the text, it does not correlate with the theory.
4. **Conversion theory:** this theory projects the thought that the coming of Christ into any believer is Christ’s second coming, and that it is

done during conversion. But this has a small number of insignificant adherents (McDearmid, 65).

5. Amillennialism: this rejects the issue of millennial, and sees it as irrelevant. According to Leitch, Amillennialism accepts the fact that Christ will come, but believe that the period is unknown. Their maxim is: the world does not get better, and it does get worse. Well, the next view counteracts this view.
6. Dispensational theory: this is the belief of many evangelicals. It separates the coming of Jesus to rapture the church, before the seven-year tribulation, from his coming to establish his kingdom. The prophecy of 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 is about the calendar of both Israel and the entire world. The prophecy, which concerns Israel, has already fulfilled 69 weeks (Each week apparently represents seven years of actual time) and now has one week remaining to its natural history. Daniel was told to close the book that the time is still the future. It is obvious that the time of the Gentiles lies between the 69th week and the 70th which has not come. When the period of grace – the Gentiles’ period is over (rapture ends it), the 70th week will start to count (that is, the tribulation period). It is at the end of the 70th week that Christ will return. The researcher sees rapture as the program of the church, while *παρουσία*, the program of the nation of Israel – which will user in there King, Lord Jesus. This is proven by the understanding of the questions of ancient Israelites, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and priests of Jesus day concerning Jesus’ kingship and the restoration of Israel. Most especially, the disciples of Jesus reflected this: “... ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’” (Acts 1:6). Jesus’ response to them, in verse 7, further clarifies this assertion (Leitch 1961, 178).

The researcher has the same opinion about this theory because the apocalyptic signs mentioned in Matthew 24 will be fulfilled at the end or expiration of the 70th week (tribulation), which the book of Revelation corroborates in 16:16-21 when the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. This event ushers in the coming of Christ seen in Revelation 19:11-21. These signs were rightly predicted by our Lord in Matthew 24 before the book of Revelation was written. The researcher sees the second public coming of Christ (*παρουσία*) as calculable based on the calendar of events given to Daniel. Ladd, says, “A real ‘any-moment’ expectation is neither biblically nor historically sound.” “For”, he adds, “we are looking eagerly for the revelation of Christ at the end of the tribulation (1 Cor. 1:7)” (Ladd 1970, 153-155). Jack and Campbell, opine that the ‘any-moment’ has been identified, in this research, as the secret-coming of Christ, which is also referred to as the rapture. It is at the end of tribulation that Antichrist will gather the armies of earth to destroy

the Jews and to battle the Lord Himself at Armageddon: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:16) (Jack and Campbell 1979, 149). Armageddon has come to stand for the most terrible of all wars. The word actually means “mount of Megiddo”, referring to a small mountain overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Then chapter 19:11-19 shows us what happened on the return of Christ. Here, the kingly expectation of the nation of Israel will be met. This view corresponds with pre-millennialism which believes that the coming of Jesus will certainly usher in the millennial reign of Christ.

The reaction of E.J. Bicknell however is that the New Testament states only bare facts about the consummation of the prophecies yet to be realized. It does not give room for wild speculations as to what time and mode of these events. A rigid systematized scheme for the times and seasons may prove very unhelpful. Every true Christian believer should however benefit from the affirmation of Christ himself concerning the certainty of his second return and the blessed hope that goes with it and be prepared to welcome Him if and when He manifests Himself (Bicknell 1950, 21).

The Place of Παρουσία

The *παρουσία* will happen once; not several times, and there is only one second coming; not repeated second coming. Since it has been proven in this research that *παρουσία* is literal, not a spiritual event, it will be wise to believe that it will happen on earth, not in heaven or elsewhere. But the question is where on earth will it be or happen? Kirban suggests that it will be on mountain Megiddo. Identifying the mountain, he says: Har Megiddon” is the Hebrew; the “mountain of Megiddo.” At the foot of this mountain lie the valley of Jezreel and the Plain of Esdraelon... the entire valley-plain region being together called “Armageddon. This amount is not heavenly, but earthly. It was here in this valley-plain region Gideon defeated Midian (Judges 6:33), and here Saul met death at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 31) (Kirban 1970, 266).

The Significance of Παρουσία To The 21st Century Church

Παρουσία which is one of the Christian eschatology concerns itself with future events that will happen to individuals after death, which is called personal or individual eschatology and future events that will happen to the entire universe, which is called general eschatology. Bruce Milne opines that Christian eschatology is also essentially Christo-centric in nature. That is, it deals with future events that are related to the second coming of Jesus Christ which is “the

hearts of Biblical teaching on the last things” (Milne 1998, 309). *Παρουσία* has been the “blessed hope of the church”, in that the church has been teaching and expecting it. Why is *παρουσία* so significant to the church, the called out ones—called from the worldly and their worldly affairs? Craig presents the following reasons:

1. It agrees with the teachings of the scripture that the church of Christ is teaching. The scripture has got a lot of critics who not only question its teachings but discard them. For instance, many believe that on his burial, His Disciples smuggled out His body – thus he did not resurrect not to talk of his coming back. Some will mockingly say: ‘the one he came, how was it to him that will warrant his coming again.’ In effect, the one Christ came was so brutal on him, so there is no need of coming again. In other words, the purpose of the first coming of Christ would be seriously jeopardized, if not totally lost.
2. The scripture has promised the saints that they will reign with Christ (1 Thess. 3:13). This statement refers to *παρουσία* not a rapture. For during rapture, the believers will be taken to heaven. Of course not to reign over angels or one another. It is when Christ will come physically back to earth with all the saints (*παρουσία*), that the saints will reign with Him over the unbelievers (those of them that are still alive).
3. It will bring to fulfillment the prophecy that David will never lack one who will seat on his throne. One of the purposes of *παρουσία* is to establish the throne of David, where Christ will reign physically on the earth for one thousand (1000) years.
4. It will complete the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 that fulfilled just a part during the time when Jesus was on the cross. It is during the second coming of Christ that Satan will be chained and bound for 1000 years.
5. It calls for repentance, readiness, and devotion. It is only those one will be raptured and those who will repent during the tribulation period that will be part of this reign (James 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 3:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-2)
6. It gives hope to the Christian who is passing through persecution to endure (1 Thess. 4). Here Paul dealt with a practical problem in the Thessalonians’ community: brothers and sisters had died. Paul encouraged them that those who died will rise to partake in the reign of Christ (Craig 1995, 143).
7. *Παρουσία* prepares people for democratic citizenship. The first is that it cultivates the “habits of restraint” that are “favorable both to the tranquility of the people and to the durability of the institutions citizens have established.” *Παρουσία* checks any tendency one might have to

abuse his/her freedom. It “prevents one from conceiving, and forbids one to commit, what is rash or unjust.”

8. One of the greatest benefits of a delayed *Παρουσία* is God’s patience. God’s sovereignty that does not act in response to finite human criticisms, outlasts all those who mock year after year after year the hope of the Christian faith that Christ will return. God knows the time and He will not forfeit His plans for humanity. One is thankful for the patience of God who has brought history this far so that even more people may find the Kingdom.
9. Besides, according to Oyetade “eschatology is the message of hope, looking for the future which is away from pain and suffering; and it helps us to overcome challenges and strive forward for a better tomorrow...as we wait for the glorious coming of the Lord at the end of time, we are urged to be active agents in bringing about a transformed world” (Oyetade 2013, 69-82).

Conclusion

From the research, it was discovered that it is improbable that Jesus ever taught or suggested that his return would definitely and necessarily happen soon. Rather Jesus, like Paul, may have considered these events as possibly imminent, but the timing was uncertain since it was unknown. The fact remains that both Paul and Jesus, as some of their Jewish and Christian contemporaries who wrote on eschatological matters, were capable of combining the language of possible imminence with a discussion of events that must transpire before the end may come. If at most Jesus or Paul spoke of the imminence of the final intervention of God or his agent in human history, then it is not appropriate to speak of Paul or for that matter of Jesus as attempting to cope with the problem of the delay of the *παρουσία*. In conclusion, therefore, in Christ all things were made, in Him, all things were reclaimed, and in Him, all things will be fulfilled. He is the Alpha and the Omega, Aleph and the Tav, the Beginning and the End (Rev. 12:6; 22:13). History finds its meaning in Him alone. He will bring history to its final consummation, the doctrine of the end times necessarily revolves around His second coming. In other words, the *παρουσία* is central to Christian eschatology, and it is the focal and object of the Christian hope (Titus 2:13). The timing, event, and reality of *παρουσία* are taught by the scripture. It is seen not only as of the blessed hope of the church but also as the blessed hope of the nation of Israel. This is because, all things, both the church and the nation of Israel, will be united under the lordship of Christ. It is incumbent on the church to be ready at all time for the *παρουσία*.

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