

**PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF PAROUSIA AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS**

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ABSTRACT

The event of parousia is the ultimate goal of all bible prophecies. The second coming of Christ will bring to climax God's divine plan for humanity. The expectation of this reality has led to various false predictions which has misled many people. God has, however, deliberately kept the exactness of the time away from man. This study, therefore, researches this certainty, particularly as expressed by apostle Paul in his epistles.

The first chapter deals with general introduction of the study, background to the study, the statement of problem, the statement of purpose, the significance of the study, methodology, delimitation, and the definition of terms. Chapter two focuses on the historical perspectives on the perousia. It explains the various historical beliefs on the subject beginning from the first to the twentieth century.

Chapter three discusses the theology of Paul on parousia as well as the different views and opinions which abound over the centuries by various theologians, not only on the return of Christ, but also on the events that are associated with it. Chapter four deals with the implications of the parousia for contemporary Christians. The chapter affirms the authenticity of Christ's second coming and the need for preparation for it. Some practical effects of the subject for the contemporary Christians are also emphasized.

Chapter five has the researcher's conclusion and recommendations. The contemporary Christians are faced with the challenge of parousia, which call for adequate preparation as they eagerly expect the consummation of this reality. God depends on them to proclaim the certainty of the Lord's return to the world.

CONCLUSION

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The prophecies made about the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ did come to pass. In the same vein it is reasonable to believe that the prophecy about the second coming of Christ, the consummation of which will bring God's plan for mankind to climax shall equally come to pass. Whether all people believe it or not does matter, because not everybody believed his birth, death and resurrection and yet it happened. Very few people saw Christ during his early ministry. However, at his appearance all eyes shall see him all at once.

Some people, nevertheless, have argued that their fore fathers and fathers were told the same thing but until now the Christ has not come. They therefore argue that if the message of his second coming is really true, why then is the delay? Let it be known to skeptics and doubters that the parousia is much closer to us today than it was to the people to whom the message was originally given. The "delay" is to ensure that the gospel message is heard by all as it must be propagated even to the uttermost parts of the world.

The challenge before Christians is that God in Christ comes. When that day comes, the last day of the last days, then time shall be no more and the dawning of an eternal day will take place. As the church's future, the great event must inspire the church's presents, however near or distant it may be. The hope of the Christians is to share with Christ his glorious appearance. The challenge for the contemporary Christians is to wake up from their slumber and preach the gospel truth of the Lord's return. To do this effectively, let them begin with

themselves. The church should teach the parousia, act it, proclaim it and also demonstrate it.

Recommendations

Erickson submitted that the second coming of Christ has the following implications and consequences:

1. God is going to bring to bear the consummation of history and the fulfillment of his purpose at the close of the age.
2. Christians should work conscientiously in expectancy of the certainty of Christ's return.
3. Our bodies shall be transformed and the mortality shall give way to immortality and there shall no longer be pain of any sort, hardship and agony.
4. Judgment will be pronounced on all manners of evil and wickedness and righteousness, holiness and faithfulness shall be rewarded.
5. Since parousia is certain and will be followed by judgment in its finality, it behooves on us believers to let God's will prevail in our lives¹

With the aforementioned in mind the attitude of Christian to parousia should not be of complacency, rejection or speculation rather than these negative attitudes, Christians must cultivate *positive feelings towards the truth of the Lord's return*² The researcher, therefore, wish to make the following recommendations to every believer who is hopefully expecting this great event.

1. Watchfulness.

Christians should be watchful. Jesus warned the disciples to be watchful for the Lord can appear at any moment (Matt 24:42). He added that since no thief

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology 2nd ed*; 1203-1204.

will give notice before breaking into a house, they are to stay awake and never sleep off. With their cloth on so that they will not be naked (Rev 16: 15) Bradbury explain this when he says: "All of these means that we are to be aware, to be informed, to be intelligent, to explore every opportunity for Christ- and to live up to the fullness of our possibilities, to be yielded to Christ and his service, as the organ keys beneath (the) fingers pressed."³

2. Christians should be hopeful.

Christians should be hopeful as they eagerly wait the parousia. We must not give room to despair, which is the opposite of hope. Paul encouraged Christians in his letter to Titus " While we wait for the blessed hope the glorious appearing of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2: 13, NIV). A blessed hope means a happy one. The word refers to inward enjoyment apart from external environment."⁴ We must remember that to talk with God, no breath is lost; to walk with God, no strength is lost; to wait on God, no time is lost.⁵

3. Christians should Keep themselves pure.

Jesus is coming for Christians (the church) that have no spot, wrinkle and blemish. He therefore expects every believer to live a holy and blameless life for it is for such that he gave himself up unto death on the cross of calvary (Eph 5;25b-27). Therefore, everyone who is expecting the glorious appearance of Christ must of necessity, keep himself pure for that is the Lord's attribute (1 John3:3). The writer of Hebrew said the prerequisite to seeing God is holiness (Heb.12:14).

² Stephen Smalley, Heaven and Hell: A Study of Last Things (Ibadan Deustar Press, 1968), 94.

³ J. W. Bradbury ed. Hastening the Day of the Lord (New York: Van Kampen Press, 1953), 105.

⁴ Geo. C. Needham, "The Blessed Hope" In The Second Coming of Christ Edited by Moody D. L. et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1896), 93.

⁵ Bradbury, 107.

4. **Christians should be joyfully expectant**

The New testament exhorts believers to live in the attitude of the parousia." Because of the certainty of the fact of the Lord's return and because of the uncertainty of the time of his return, Christians should be alert in anticipation of that experience."⁶ This thought of parousia should at all times, be a reason rejoicing for the believers. Peter exhorted the suffering and persecuted converts to rejoice so that at the revelation of Christ they might be overjoyed (1Pet. 4:12-134) Since the Lord's return portends ultimate triumph of the redemptive purpose of God, Christians should joyfully expect it's consummation.

5. **Christians should preach the Gospel**

Christian should be diligent in preaching the good news to the world in view of the Lord's return, which could take place at any moment. The Bible vividly attributes the delay as an opportunity for witnessing to the truth of salvation, which is available through Christ's redemptive work. That is the " Great Commission" given to every Christian and the church at large by the master, Jesus. Much as we preach Christ in words, the practicality of our belief and message should be seen in equally our day to day lives and as we relate with people in the society.

⁶Summers, The Life Beyond, 136.