
PAROUSIA FULFILLED – NATURE OF FULFILLMENT

By Kenneth N Higgs

INTRODUCTION:

Q: Why do we say that Christ returned in the 1st Century AD?

A: Because that is the clear message of dozens of verses in the New Testament (NT).

Q: If so, HOW did he return? WHAT happened? What was the NATURE of the Parousia?

A: In order to understand the NATURE of fulfillment of the Parousia of Christ, we need to review his sermon on the Mount of Olives, from where his disciples were admiring the Temple.

The disciples were bragging about the beauty of Herod's Temple, saying:

“Look... what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” (Mark 13:1).

Imagine their shock and confusion, when Jesus revealed that the beautiful Temple was doomed to complete destruction:

*“Do you see these great buildings? **There will not be left here one stone upon another** that will not be thrown down.” (Mark 13:2)*

*“You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, **there will not be left here one stone upon another** that will not be thrown down.” (Matt 24:2 cf: Luke 21:6)*

The disciples asked to know more, saying:

*“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the **sign of your coming** [Gk: παρουσία : parousia] and of the **end of the age?**” (Matt 24:3 cf: Mark 13:4, Luke 21:7) ⁱ*

EVENTS THAT WOULD HAPPEN BEFORE THE PAROUSIA

Jesus explained to his 1st Century disciples what would happen and what they **would likely live to see** before the parousia. The next table lists the bible verses that describe the parousia in three gospel accounts.

Events	Mark	Matthew	Luke
a: False messiahs & false prophets	13:5-6,21-22	24:4-5,11,23-24	21:8
b: Wars & rumours of wars	13:7-8a	24:6-7a	21:9-10
c: Earthquakes & famines	13:8b	24:7b	21:11a
d: Terrors & great signs from heaven	--	--	21:11b
e: Persecution of Christians & apostasy	13:9, 11-13	24:9-10, 12	21:12, 16-17
f: Gospel proclaimed to all nations / throughout whole world	13:10	24:14	
g: Abomination of desolation / Jerusalem surrounded by armies	13:14	24:15	21:20
h: Great tribulation & destruction upon Jerusalem	13:2, 19	24:2, 21-22	21:6, 22-24
i: Sun & Moon darkened, stars will fall from heaven	13:24-25	24:29	21:25-26
j: Son of Man coming in clouds with power & great glory	13:26	24:30	21:27
k: Angels gathering the elect (ie: the rapture)	13:27	24:31	
l: All this occurs before existing generation passed away	13:30	24:34	21:32

Referring to these details from these three gospel accounts, **James Stuart Russell**ⁱⁱ observes that:

“Every word is spoken to the disciples and to them alone ... [not] to some unknown and yet non-existent persons in a far distant age.” (The Parousiaⁱ, p.69)

Jesus told his disciples not to be alarmed by the first group of events (false messiahs and false prophets, wars and rumours of wars, famines, earthquakes, great persecution and murder of Christians, apostasy and lawlessness (Matt 24:4-14). He said that:

“the end is not yet. ... All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.” (Matt 24:6 & 8)

Jesus also promised that: *“the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matt 24:13)*

(Note: this verse is not talking about spiritual salvationⁱⁱⁱ)

Thirty years later, when the disciples heard about various wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions and apostasy, they remembered Jesus' advice and knew that they needed to continue waiting and watching, because the end was “not yet”.^{iv}

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF PRE-PAROUSIA EVENTS

Several historical sources confirm the fulfillment of these pre-parousia events.

(A) FALSE MESSIAHS AND FALSE PROPHETS

The New Testament (NT) records that many false prophets appeared before AD 70, including: Theudas (Acts 5:36), Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37), Simon the magician (Acts 8:9-11), Bar-Jesus the magician (Acts 13:6), an Egyptian rebel (Acts 21:38) and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17-18). 2 Corinthians 11:13 also talks about “false apostles”.

Flavius Josephus^v, a 1st Century Jewish historian, records that, during the reign of Felix, procurator/governor of Judea (AD 52-60):

“the country was again filled with robbers and impostors who deluded the multitude... [they] persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God.” (Antiquities of the Jews², 20-8-5 & 6)

(B) WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

John L Bray notes that there were numerous wars and rumours of wars prior to AD 70, and that tens of thousands of people perished at various times and places, including in Rome, Palestine, Samaria, Mesopotamia, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Syria, Scythopolis, Alexandria, Damascus, Spain, Gaul, Germany and Illyricum (*Matthew 24 Fulfilled*³, p.26).

Josephus records numerous wars between the Jews and their neighbours. **Eusebius Pamphilus**^{vi} also records various wars and commotions prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. For example, he wrote that, during the rule of Pontius Pilate:

“in Jerusalem itself a great many other revolts broke out ... the city and all Judaea were in the grip of faction, war and an endless succession of criminal plots, until the final hour overtook them – the siege under Vespasian.” (The History of the Church⁴, p.43).

(C) EARTHQUAKES AND FAMINES

The NT tells us about earthquakes and great famine in the 1st Century:

*“suddenly there was a **great earthquake**, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.” Acts 16:26)*

*“Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (**this took place in the days of Claudius**).” Acts 1:28)*

Josephus reports great earthquakes during the reigns of Caligula (AD 37-41) and Claudius (AD 41-54) in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Asmos, Rome, Apimea, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania and Judea.

Josephus also reports various famines in Judea and Rome. During one such famine, in the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54), a kindly Queen, Helena of Adiabene, visited Jerusalem (circa AD 43):

*“Now her coming was of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem; for whereas a **famine** did oppress them at that time, and **many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food withal**, Queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria, with money to buy a great quantity of corn, and others of them to Cyprus, to bring a cargo of dried figs; and as soon as they were come back, and brought those provisions, which was done very quickly, **she distributed food to those that were in want of it**” (Antiquities ², 20-2-5).*

(D) TERRORS AND SIGNS FROM HEAVEN

“... and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” (Luke 21:11b)

Josephus recorded several ominous portents and signs from heaven in the final months of Jerusalem:

*“Thus there was a **star, resembling a sword**, which stood over the city: and a **comet**, that continued a whole year... (and) on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, **so great a light shone round the altar, and the holy house**, that it appeared to be bright day time. Which light lasted for half an hour... (and) at the same festival also an heifer, as she was led by the High-priest to be sacrificed, **brought forth a lamb, in the midst of the temple**. Moreover **the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple**, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor; which was there made of one entire stone: was seen to be **opened of its own accord**, about the sixth hour of the night.” (Jewish Wars ², 6-5-3, paras 289-296).*

The men of learning interpreted: *“that this signal foreshewed the desolation that was coming upon them.”* ²

(E) PERSECUTION AND APOSTASY

The NT provides historical evidence of persecution and apostasy that ravaged the early Church: including Acts 7 – the stoning of Stephen; Acts 8:1 – great persecution against the Church in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria; Acts 12 – James killed and Peter arrested; Acts 14:19 – Paul stoned and left for dead; Acts 16 – Paul and Silas beaten and arrested in Philippi; Acts 21 – Paul arrested and imprisoned in chains for many years and eventually transported to Rome.

There was brutal persecution and murder of Christians by Emperor Nero with the support of the Jews (*who wanted to exterminate Christians*), including crucifixions, burning alive at the stake as garden lamps, and being torn apart by beasts in arenas. Apostle John said that he was their companion in tribulation. (Rev 1:9)

Paul noted that, in his days, some had left the Christian faith and were trying to subvert others as well:

*“Since we have heard that **some persons have gone out from us** and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,” (Acts 15:24)*

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” (2 Thess 2:7)

*“But avoid **irreverent babble**, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like **gangrene**. Among them are **Hymenaeus and Philetus**, who have swerved from the truth,” (2 Tim 2:16-18a)*

*“Have nothing to do with **foolish, ignorant controversies**; you know that **they breed quarrels**.” (2 Tim 2:23)*

*“For **there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers**, especially those of **the circumcision party**. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by **teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach**.” (Titus 1:10-11)*

(F) GOSPEL PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout **the whole world** [Gk: οἰκουμένη : oikoumene] as a testimony to all nations, and **then the end will come**.” (Matt 24:14)*

The Greek word “οἰκουμένη”^{vii} was also used in reference to the Roman census at the time of Jesus’ birth:

*“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that **all the world** [Gk: οἰκουμένην : oikoumenen] should be registered.” (Luke 2:1)*

Futurists^{viii} often misunderstand ‘oikoumene’ as meaning ‘the whole planet Earth’. They claim that the gospel has not been proclaimed in “*the whole world*”, so Jesus has not returned. They are mistaken!

Caesar’s decree, in Luke 2, did NOT include the whole planet Earth, such as America, India, China or Australia. Similarly, Jesus did **NOT mean the whole planet Earth**, when he sent his disciples to preach the kingdom of God to the lost sheep of Israel, dwelling in parts of Judea and the Roman Empire (“*the whole world*”). That is what the Greek word “οἰκουμένη” denotes, ie: ‘the inhabited world of the Roman empire’.

The historical accomplishment of the Apostles’ mission is confirmed by Apostle Paul, who wrote:

*“the gospel that you heard, **which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven**.” (Col 1:23)*

*“Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed **in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing**.” (Col 1:5-6)*

*“my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ... has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings **has been made known to all nations**.” (Rom 16:25-26)*

*“Their voice has gone out **to all the earth**, and their words **to the ends of the world**.” (Rom 10:18)*

Eusebius also notes these things:

*“Thus, with the powerful co-operation of Heaven **the whole world was suddenly lit by the sunshine of the saving word**. At once, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, the voice of its inspired evangelists and apostles went forth **into all the earth**, and their words **to the ends of the world**.” (History⁴, p.39).*

(This does not mean that gospel preaching ended! “The word of our God will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8))

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF ACTUAL PAROUSIA EVENTS

The Parousia really began with the Abomination of Desolation (surrounding of Jerusalem by foreign armies).

(G) ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION/ JERUSALEM SURROUNDED BY ARMIES

The appearance of the “abomination of desolation” would be an important signal, according to Jesus:

*“So when **YOU** ^{ix}see **the abomination of desolation** spoken of by the prophet Daniel, **standing in the holy place** (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea **flee to the mountains**. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! **Pray that YOUR^{ix} flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.**” (Matt 24:15-20 cf. Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)*

In the historical context, the Jews would have considered as “the holy place” the whole land of Judea: “the holy land”. And they would have considered as “abomination” anything that involved the worship of false gods in sacred places, especially in sight of the city and the Temple.

Luke’s gospel, written primarily to a 1st Century Gentile audience, describes that same event in words that non-Jews could understand:

*“But when **YOU**^{ix} see **Jerusalem surrounded by armies**, then know that **its desolation has come near**. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, **to fulfill all that is written.**” (Luke 21:20-22)*

Josephus records the fulfilment of this prophecy in 66 AD when Judea was invaded and **Jerusalem was surrounded by armies**. Roman Governor Cestius Gallus and his armies, with their eagle ensigns and images of Caesar, surrounded and attacked Jerusalem. After some time, Cestius Gallus broke off the attack and withdrew his forces. By divine providence, any remaining Christians still living in Jerusalem and Judea at that time were able to escape and flee across the Jordan River to Pella. Thus they were delivered from the outpouring of God’s wrath on Jerusalem and Old Covenant (OC) Israel in those “*days of vengeance*”.

(H) GREAT TRIBULATION AND DESTRUCTION UPON JERUSALEM

CONSUMMATION OF OLD COVENANT

When God originally made the OC with Moses and the children of Israel, he commanded them, as a nation, to keep his laws and statutes. Speaking through his prophet Moses, he said:

“This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 26:16)

God also warned of the consequences of breaking this covenant:

*“But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then **all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.**” (Deut 28:15)*

*“The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, **until you are destroyed and perish quickly** on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.” (Deut 28:20)*

Over a period of more than 1400 years, Israel sinned and rebelled repeatedly against God. They failed to keep his laws and statutes; instead they degraded themselves and polluted the land with their idolatry, murder and corruption, thereby incurring the Lord’s wrath.

The coming of these punishments and divine wrath was also confirmed by Malachi, the last OT prophet:

*“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that **it will leave them neither root nor branch.**” (Mal 4:1)*

The prophet Micah specifically warned about the destruction of Jerusalem:

*“Therefore because of you Zion shall be **plowed as a field**, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.” (Micah 3:12)*

The impending fulfillment of this divine punishment was emphasised by the Jesus, who said:

*“...**all these things** will come upon **this generation** [Gk: τὴν γενεάν ταύτην : ten genean tauten].” (Matt 23:36).*

*“And **alas for women who are pregnant** and for **those who are nursing infants** in those days! Pray that **YOUR**^{ix} [Gk: ὑμῶν : humon] **flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath**. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Matt 24:19-21)*

*“**Alas for women who are pregnant** and for **those who are nursing infants** in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth [Gk: τῆς γῆς : tes ges : THE LAND] and wrath against **THIS people** [Gk: λαῶ τοῦτω : lao touto]. They will **fall by the edge of the sword** and be **led captive among all nations**, and **Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles**, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:23-24)*

The Greek phrase “τῆς γῆς” (tes ges) actually means **THE LAND**. Jesus was prophesying great distress / tribulation upon the land of Judea (NOT the whole planet Earth). Note also that he said that there would be “wrath against **this people** (λαῶ τοῦτω)” NOT against some future people thousands of years later.

As Jesus was being led to the cross of Calvary, many women were weeping for him. He turned to them and said:

*“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but **weep for YOURSELVES**^{ix} [Gk: ἑαυτάς : heautas] and for **YOUR children** [Gk: τέκνα ὑμῶν : tekna humon]. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’” (Luke 23:28-30)*

(i) SUN AND MOON DARKENED, STARS WILL FALL FROM HEAVEN

*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened**, and **the moon will not give its light**, and **the stars will fall from heaven**, and **the powers of the heavens will be shaken**.” (Matt 24:29)*

Much of Jesus’ revelation of his coming Parousia uses symbolic, prophetic language, which was not intended to be understood as literal narrative.

Futurists misinterpret this and like passages to mean that the literal Earth and solar system will be destroyed by God. They completely overlook Isaiah’s use of identical language when he prophesied God’s judgement on Babylon:

*“For **the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light**; **the sun will be dark at its rising**, and **the moon will not shed its light**. (Isaiah 13:10)*

The literal planet Earth and Sun were NOT destroyed. Such OT apocalyptic symbolism was used to convey the severity of the overthrow and destruction that came upon ancient Babylon: great political, social and spiritual upheaval.

Similar use of astral bodies appears in Joseph’s dream about “sun, moon and eleven stars” bowing down to him (Genesis 37). His father Jacob immediately knew what it SYMBOLISED, ie: that he (Jacob) and his wife and the eleven eldest sons would one day bow down to Joseph. It represented great political and social upheaval in the existing order. Joseph’s dream prophecy was fulfilled some 20 years later.

In AD 70, the Siege of Jerusalem resulted in the complete overthrow and destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, the priesthood, the Jewish rulers and the nation of OT Israel. Their “sun, moon and stars”: the existing political, religious and social order were completely destroyed and abolished forever.

As Russell contends:

"The 'close of the age' coincided with the Parousia, and the outward and visible sign by which it is distinguished is **the destruction of Jerusalem**. This is the terminus by which in the New Testament the field is bounded. To Israel it was '**the end, 'the end of all things, 'the passing away of heaven and earth, 'the abrogation of the old order, the inauguration of the new.**' (Parousia ¹, p.121)

(J) SON OF MAN COMING ON CLOUDS WITH POWER & GREAT GLORY

"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming [Gk: ἐρχόμενον : erchomenon] on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt 24:30)

Note the "coming on clouds of heaven" metaphor. This was also mentioned earlier, by the angels, when Jesus ascended into heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection. As the disciples stood gazing into heaven, "**a cloud took him out of their sight.**" (Acts 1:9) Two men in white robes then said to them:

"This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11)

Jesus also talked about "coming on clouds of heaven" at his trial before the high priest and Jewish elders:

"But I tell you, from now on YOU will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming [Gk: ἐρχόμενον : erchomenon] on the clouds of heaven." (Matt 26:64)

Josephus' account of the siege of Jerusalem (AD 70) suggests that this "coming on clouds of heaven" event was actually seen and witnessed by people in Jerusalem and other Judean cities:

'... a few days after that feast, '... on 21st day of Artemisius [Jyar]... 'a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence".' (Jewish Wars ⁴, 6-5-3, paras 297-299).

Roman historian **Cornelius Tacitus** ^x also recorded these strange events in Jerusalem (*Histories* ⁵, Book 5, v. 13)

(K) ANGELS GATHERING THE ELECT

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive YOU unto myself; that where I am, YOU may be also." (John 14:3)

Jesus and his Apostles wanted 1st Century Christians (AD 30 - 70) to persevere in the Christian faith and not turn back to OC Judaism. At the parousia, they would be vindicated and rescued from their suffering.

- James urged his 1st Century readers to: "**Be patient... until the coming** [Gk: παρουσίας : parousias] **of the Lord.**" (James 5:7)
- John urged his 1st Century readers to: "... abide in him so that **when he appears WE may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming** [Gk: παρουσία : parousia]" (1 John 2:28).
- Paul wrote to the 1st Century Church at Thessalonika, noting that some would be alive at the Parousia: "... **WE who are ALIVE, who are LEFT until the coming** [Gk: παρουσίαν : parousian] **of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep**" (1 Thess 4:15).

- He said that his “... *boasting before the Lord Jesus at his coming* [Gk: παρουσία : parousia]” (1 Thess 2:19) would be about the church of the Thessalonians, and he prayed that God would sanctify and preserve THEM blameless: “*at the coming* [Gk: παρουσία : parousia] *of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess 3:13 & 5:23).
- Paul also spoke about: “*OUR being gathered together to him (Christ)*” ... at “*the coming* [Gk: παρουσίας : parousias] *of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 2:1).

Their deliverance began in earnest when they saw the “abomination of desolation” surrounding Jerusalem, and they fled out of the city and out of Judea. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive historical evidence for what happened after this mass exodus... the historical record is silent about their existence after AD 70. However, this writer believes that several NT promises indicate that these saints would then be gathered up to heaven along with their fellow saints who had died in Christ. This gathering would be in much the same way as Enoch and Elijah were taken into heaven. See passages like 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Thess 4:15-17, 2 Thess 2:1 and John 14:3.

SUDDEN AND VISIBLE AS A LIGHTNING FLASH

Jesus prophesied that his Parousia would be as sudden and visible as lightning flashes across the sky:

*“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be **the coming** [Gk: παρουσία : parousia] of the Son of Man.” (Matt 24:27)*

A lightning strike is sudden and literally visible over a wide area, such as a small city or region, but it is NEVER visible all over planet Earth (*a Futurist misconception*). **Jesus NEVER said that EVERY person in EVERY place on Earth would see his ‘Second Coming’ parousia.**

Jesus also compared the Parousia to the sudden devastation of the global flood in Noah’s day:

*“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** [Gk: παρουσία : parousia] of the Son of Man.” (Matt 24:39)*

Jesus did NOT say that the Parousia would vaporise the physical planet and other objects in outer space. That is another Futurist misconception. The flood in Noah’s day was global, covering even the highest mountains, and completely destroyed all air-breathing life on the planet, but it did NOT destroy the physical planet Earth or other astral bodies. (See earlier article: “*Parousia Fulfilled – No End of World*”⁶).

Apostle Peter also alluded to the flood in his two general epistles (letters):

*‘scoffers will come in the **last days** with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of **his coming**? [Gk: παρουσίας : parousias] For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” ’ (2 Peter 3:3-4)*

Peter reminded early Christians (in the 1st Century) of the devastation and death caused by that flood:

“... the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.” (2 Peter 3:6)

Then he warned of similar devastation during the Parousia:

*“... and it will come -- the day of the Lord -- as a thief in the night, in which the heavens with a rushing noise will pass away, and the elements [Gk: στοιχεῖα : stoicheia : ‘elementary principles’] with burning heat be dissolved, and earth and the works in it shall be burnt up. ... **the presence** [Gk: παρουσίαν : parousian] **of the day of God**, by which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements [Gk: στοιχεῖα : stoicheia : ‘elementary principles’] with burning heat shall melt;” (2 Peter 3:10 & 12) ... *Young’s Literal Translation*^x (YLT))*

Peter was NOT predicting total destruction and vaporisation of the physical planet and Cosmos: this passage is using prophetic/apocalyptic language, not historical narrative language. We need to examine these words (“*elements melting*”, “*heavens passing away*” and “*earth burning up*”) in the context of Old Covenant Judaism

circa 60 AD. The word rendered “elements” is actually the Greek word “στοιχεῖα” (stoicheia) which is the plural form of the noun stoicheion. Strong’s Definitions suggests that it likely means: “*something orderly in arrangement*”, “*constituent*”, “*element, principle or rudiment*”.

What Peter was talking about was the ‘*elementary principles*’ and ‘*constituents*’ of the Old Covenant (OC) Mosaic religion and theocratic nation. They were all destined to be destroyed, burnt up, dissolved.

EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE WAITING FOR THE PAROUSIA

Peter urges his 1st Century readers to be:

“waiting for and hastening the coming [Gk: παρουσία : parousia] of the day of God.” (2 Peter 3:12a);

“But according to his promise WE are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since YOU are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.” (2 Peter 3:13 & 14)

Paul commended the Christians at Thessalonika, who had:

“turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess 1:9-10)

Clearly both Peter and Paul expected that some 1st Century Christians would **BE ALIVE** at the Parousia and waiting for it.

JEWISH REBELLION AND DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

History records that the curses of the OC, discussed earlier, came upon the last generation of OT Israel: that wicked and perverse generation. The Siege of Jerusalem was the commencement of the “*days of vengeance*”.

In AD 65 Jewish zealots rebelled against Rome, provoking a brutal war (AD 66-70) and eventually Titus’s siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which lasted about seven months in AD 70, causing horrific suffering, violence and death by sword and famine. Josephus estimated that 1.1 million people perished, including many thousands who were killed by rival armies of Jewish zealots led by rival warlords: Eleazar, John and Simon. These vicious criminals murdered anyone who opposed their rebellion, including innocent people and priests offering sacrifices in the temple. Josephus wrote: “*the temple was defiled everywhere with murders*” ... “*till the dead bodies*” and “*the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves*”. (Wars², 5-1-2 & 3, paras 10 & 18)

Josephus repeatedly urged the people to surrender and sadly declared: “*Wherefore, I cannot but suppose that God is fled out of his sanctuary and stands on the side of those against whom you fight*”. (Wars², 5-9-4, para 412)

The Roman General, Titus, desired to spare the magnificent Temple and other parts of the city. He also hoped to end the bloodshed and let innocent civilians go free (apart from the rebels). However, the zealot thugs refused peace and burned down the storehouses of grain and food, causing a great famine which “*devoured the people by whole houses and families*”. (Wars², 5-12-3, para 512) They robbed the poor and killed anyone who tried to escape from the city. They set fire to the Temple colonnades and filled the inner court with more dead bodies.

Finally, the Temple was completely burned to the ground and all Jerusalem was destroyed and flattened (apart from three eminent towers and parts of the west wall). Josephus remarked that: “*there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited*”. (Wars², 7-1-1, para 3) Many thousands of Jews were taken as slaves to work the mines of Egypt or to be killed in the arenas, in fulfillment of OT prophecies:

Deut 28:68 – “the Lord will bring you back in ships to **Egypt**” ... “as male and female **slaves**”.

Jer 44:7 – “Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, **leaving you no remnant?**”

Hos 8:13; 9:3; 11:3-5 – “they shall return to **Egypt**”; “they shall not remain in the land of the Lord, but Ephraim shall return to **Egypt**”; “Will they not return to **Egypt?**”(NIV).

CONCLUSION:

Many Futurists mistakenly predict a future global judgement and the physical destruction of planet Earth, the universe and every living thing at the Parousia (‘Second Coming’) of Christ. Such doomsday predictions are unbiblical: it is not scripture.

To properly understand the NATURE of the Parousia, we need to read what Jesus said about it, ie: the various events and signs of his return at the Parousia. His sermon on the Mount of Olives (*cf*: Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) told his disciples about his sudden visible “coming on clouds of heaven”; the destruction of Herod’s Temple and all of Jerusalem; his judgement and destruction of the last generation of OC Israel.

History records that ALL THIS OCCURRED before the existing generation (contemporaries of Jesus) had passed away. Many events of the Parousia are recorded in the book of Acts, the Epistles and the histories of various 1st Century authors, like Josephus and Tacitus. The abominations, violence, bloodshed, famine and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the terrible siege of AD 70, as well as the armies visibly seen in the clouds over Jerusalem demonstrate that: “... *these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written*”.

The Parousia (‘Second Coming’ or ‘Return’) of Christ was fulfilled once and for all time by AD 70. His kingdom “shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. ... it shall stand forever”. (Dan 2:44)

REFERENCES

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible verses in this study are from the English Standard Version Bible, Bible Gateway – ESV Bible, viewed online March 2018 at: <https://www.biblegateway.com>

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2. **“Josephus: The Complete Works”**, translated by Whiston, William. A.M., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville 1998.
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4. **“The History of the Church”** by Eusebius Pamphilus, 313 AD, translated by Williamson, G.A., Penguin Books, London 1989 ed.
5. **“Cornelius Tacitus: The Histories”**, Book 5 online version downloaded 14 Feb 2019 from: <https://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/tacitusc/histries/index.htm>
6. **“Parousia Fulfilled – No End of World”** by Higgs, Kenneth N., 2019

[MORE INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK: please email Ken Higgs => info@parousiafulfilled.com]

APPENDIX:

This is a list of New Testament Verses which mention the Parousia (Gk: παρουσία)* (ESV):

Matthew 24:3 – *‘As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the **sign of your coming*** and of the **end of the age?**” ’*

24:27 – *“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the **coming*** of the Son of Man.”*

24:37 – *“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the **coming*** of the Son of Man.”*

24:39 – *“and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the **coming*** of the Son of Man.”*

1 Corinthians 15:23 – *“But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then **at his coming*** those who belong to Christ.”*

1 Thessalonians 2:19 – *“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus **at his coming*** ? Is it not you?”*

3:13 – *“so that he may establish **your hearts** blameless in holiness before our God and Father, **at the coming*** of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”*

4:15 – *“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that **we who are alive, who are left until the coming*** of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”*

5:23 – *“Now may the God of peace himself **sanctify you** completely, and may **your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming*** of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:1 – *“Now concerning the **coming*** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,”*

2:8 – *“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing **by the appearance of his coming*** .”*

James 5:7-8 – *“**Be patient**, therefore, brothers, **until the coming*** of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. **You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming*** of the Lord is at hand.”*

2 Peter 1:16 – *“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you **the power and coming*** of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*

3:4 – *“They will say, “Where is the promise of **his coming*** ? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” ’*

3:12 – *“waiting for and hastening the **coming*** of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!”*

1 John 2:28 – *“And now, little children, abide in him, so that **when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming*** .”*

ENDNOTES

ⁱ **Matthew 24:3** indicates that the disciples connected all these things as parts of one whole: (a) the destruction of the Temple (v.2); (b) the coming of the Lord (Parousia); and (c) the end of the age. There is no reasonable grounds for splitting their question into separate and distinct parts (as some Futurist attempt to do).

ⁱⁱ **James Stuart Russell** (1816-1895) was a minister in the Congregational Church at Great Yarmouth, Tottenham, Edmonton, and Bayswater. He held to a past fulfillment of the Second Advent and in 1878 he published a book on this subject, originally entitled *“The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming”*.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 24:13** is not referring to spiritual salvation. In the historical context, Jesus was encouraging his 1st Century disciples to continue in the Christian faith, trusting that he would eventually deliver them from their suffering and tribulation, when he returned at his parousia. He was urging them not to give in to worldly pressures... not to turn back to the Old Covenant (OC) religion of Judaism, which was coming to an end.

^{iv} What possible benefit would the Parousia be to persecuted and suffering Christians, in the 1st Century, if it did not occur in their lifetime?

^v **Flavius Josephus** (circa 37-100 AD) was a Jewish priest, scholar, historian and active participant in the final decades of ancient Israel (Judea). He was also an aristocrat, a Pharisee, a military commander and politician, who wrote extensive accounts of his life and Jewish history, including a detailed account of the Jewish War against Rome. He was an eyewitness of the horrors and abominations (which he tried to stop) during the Roman siege of Jerusalem (AD 70).

^{vi} **Eusebius Pamphilus** (circa AD 260-339) was a learned Greek Christian scholar and bishop of Caesarea of Palestine, where he lived most of his life.

^{vii} **Oikoumenē**: Greek: Strong’s Concordance says: “the inhabited earth” ... “(properly: the land that is being inhabited, the land in a state of habitation), the inhabited world, that is, the Roman world, for all outside it was regarded as of no account”. (from: *Strong’s Concordance - viewed online March 2019 at: <https://biblehub.com/greek/3625.htm>*)

^{viii} **Futurist**: These people claim that we are still living in the Last Days waiting for the Parousia, when Christ will return in judgement and resurrect the living and the dead and destroy the planet, etc. This viewpoint is generally held by Dispensationalism, Premillennialism, Postmillennialism and Amillennialism, with their own peculiar variations.

^{ix} What would be the point in Jesus forewarning his disciples about the “abomination of desolation” or telling the women of Jerusalem to “weep for YOURSELVES”, if (as some Futurists claim) the Second Coming and wrath still has not happened? Words like “YOU”, “YOURSELVES” and “YOUR” in Matthew 24 and Luke 23 clearly refer to Jesus’ 1st Century audience, to whom he was directly speaking... NOT non-existent people thousands of years later.

^x **Cornelius Tacitus** (circa AD 56-120) was a Roman orator, public official and historian. He wrote “Annals”: a history of the Roman Empire from the reign of Tiberius (AD 14) to the end of Nero’s reign (AD 66?). He also wrote “Histories”: a Roman historical chronicle (written c. AD 100-110), covering the period from the fall of Nero (AD 68) to the end of Domitian’s reign (AD 96).

^{xi} **Young’s Literal Translation**: “an extremely literal translation that attempts to preserve the tense and word usage as found in the original Greek and Hebrew writings.” (from *GotQuestions - What is Young’s Literal Translation (YLT)?*, viewed online March 2018 at: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Youngs-Literal-Translation-YLT.html>)