

“Upon the Lampstand”

“After lighting a lamp there is not one person who conceals it with something or who puts it underneath a bed. Instead the person puts it upon a Lampstand so that those who come inside may see the light.”—Jesus of Nazareth, Gospel of Luke 8:16-17.

Question: *What is the meaning of the Greek word PAROUSIA? Is it “presence,” “coming,” or something else?—August 22, 2009.*

Answer: This might not be the answer you were expecting in that, though I can appreciate the existing confusion and uncertainty about how to translate this word, there is something more important for Christians to keep in mind as it relates to this word and to the New Testament teaching concerning the coming “day” of Jesus of Nazareth. Consider (with underlining added):

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 (NRSV)

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

Though the word PAROUSIA does not occur in the above texts, it does occur in what immediately precedes it, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, concerning the resurrection. But Paul then right away reminds the Thessalonians they “do not need to have anything written” concerning the “times and seasons,” that is, other than (as we already know) “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”—1 Thessalonians 5:2.

Anything anyone writes beyond this, in a way that is meant to excite or alert people beyond the clear and simple readiness we should have each and every single day, as if we were preparing for “a thief in the night,” is wrong. That is why so many have become disillusioned with the *PAROUSIA* of the Lord Jesus because of the teachings of the Watchtower Society and other prophetic speculation groups: They are not willing to remain content with being prepared for this “day” as we would prepare for “a thief in the night.”

Yet, that is in fact precisely how “the day of the Lord ... is to come [Greek: form of *ERCHOMAI*]” according to 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (underlining added). Indeed, Paul later wrote about similar concerns when he told the Thessalonians “respecting the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ” (NWT) to “not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here” (NRSV). But that is what many seem most eager to continue doing.—2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; compare 1 John 4:1.

As a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses who rejects the unbiblical traditions of the Watchtower Society and of anyone else, I will not be a party to anything which puts peoples’ minds in any other state than that which has been given to us above (and below) by commenting further on the meaning of *PAROUSIA* in relation to “the times and seasons,” or to “the day of the Lord”:

Revelation 3:2-3 (NWT)

“Become watchful, and strengthen the things remaining that were ready to die, for I have not found your deeds fully performed before my God. Therefore, continue mindful of how you have received and how you heard, and go on keeping [it], and repent. Certainly unless you wake up, I shall come as a thief, and you will not know at all at what hour I shall come upon you.”

Revelation 16:15 (NWT)

“Look! I am coming as a thief. Happy is the one that stays awake and keeps his outer garments, that he may not walk naked and people look upon his shamefulness.”

We can all ‘keep close in mind the [*PAROUSIA*] of God’s day’ (2 Peter 3:12) by remembering “the day of the Lord will come [Greek: *hEKO*] as a thief” (2 Peter 3:10), just as the above text and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 tell us to do.

However, if you were asking your question in a more general sense, that is, apart from the specific application to the “times and seasons” or to “the day of the Lord,” then I would encourage you to evaluate the good reasons for its meaning for yourself, by first considering each use of the word in the New Testament according to its context, then by evaluating what various Greek dictionaries and lexical works put forth as good reasons, and so become “fully convinced in [your] own mind.”—Romans 14:5.

If you do this, then I believe you will find that *PAROUSIA* can have meanings similar to “coming” or “presence,” or a sense similar to both, such as “arrive.” Where it concerns “the day of the Lord,” however, you “do not need to have anything written to you.” That is why those who continue to write about such things are failing to look after the Master’s belongings, and in effect they “beat [their] fellow slaves.” For though “they understood the will of [their] master,” they “did not get ready or do in line with his will” by preparing others for the day of the Lord in ways that do not have the opposite result, namely, of causing people to doubt his “coming,” “presence,” or arrival” due to their false interpretations of Bible prophecy and chronology.—Matthew 24:48-51; Luke 12:45-48; compare Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

Concentrate instead on building up your faith in Jesus of Nazareth based on the best available reasons, by helping those in need learn about the *good* news of God’s kingdom, and how we can better secure our house of faith against a visit by one who will come to us as “a thief in the night.”—Hebrews 3:1-6; Revelation 3:20-21; 14:6-7; 22:1-7.

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