

Gary,

The following may help you understand my position as it relates to 1Thessalonians, etc.

Blessings,

Lloyd

My understanding of "I Thessalonians 4:13-17"

By Lloyd Dale

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians in about 54 AD:

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep (died), lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, remaining until the Parousia of the Lord, will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, remaining shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)"

The issue for the first century Thessalonians was "what has or will happened in the "Parousia" to those who trusted in Christ, but have now died ("fallen into sleep") were buried and decaying in the grave. (For a good study of "the Parousia," refer to the CD's on that subject which will soon be on my website www.lloyddale.com Until then request one from me, and I will send it to you.

Paul explains to them that they have "hope in Jesus Christ" because He "died and rose again" from the grave in which He was buried.

As we study this passage we must keep fixed very firmly in our minds that Paul wrote this letter to first century Christians in Thessalonica and that this letter was relevant to those first century Christians, thus while instructive for us, it is not relevant to us who are now living in the 21st century in the same way that it was to those first century Christians.

With this in mind, we see that Paul told those first century Christians that "God would bring them which sleep in Jesus with Him" into the "Parousia"

(verses 14b & 15). Paul instructed those first century Christians (not us living now in the 21st century) that "we who are alive and remain until the Parousia of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." The "we who are alive, remaining until the Parousia of the Lord," in verse 15 quoted above, is in reference to and relevant only to Paul and those first century Christians; it does not include 21st century Christians. Paul was no dummy, if it had been his intention to inform those first century Christians that the events described in this passage were not going to take place in the context of those first century Christians he would have written "those who are alive, remaining...", **but we can easily see that is not what he wrote**. Paul wrote the letter and in that context "we" absolutely **must** include the first century Christians to whom he wrote or language has no meaning. Thus, we can see that Paul expected this event (the Parousia) to occur during his contemporary generation; NOT IN SOME FAR FUTURE GENERATION. Paul fully expected the "Parousia" to occur in his contemporary generation just as Jesus ("by the word of the Lord") had told him it would.

Therefore, unless we are willing to believe that Jesus and Paul were wrong, thus not inspired of the Holy Spirit, (which I am not); **we are required** to accept the fact that the "Parousia" of which he was writing did in fact occur in the first century before some of the people to whom he wrote that letter had died.

Because of the way the Greek word "parousia" has been translated as "coming" in our English Bibles we get a false impression of what this and similar passages are referring to. In Matthew 24:3 the disciples said to Jesus, "tell us... what shall be the sign of your Parousia?"

Please remember that the context of Matthew 24:3 is the "destruction of the temple" which Jesus has just told the disciples about. In this passage, the disciples did not ask Jesus anything about any "coming to earth" as we erroneously believe when we read the word "coming" in our English Bible.

"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him **the buildings of the temple**. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not **one stone** (of the "buildings of the temple") **shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**" (Matthew 24:1-2 NKJV)"

The record in the Gospels about the disciples failure to understand the full truth about the death and resurrection of Jesus (Fourth Gospel 20:9, et al.) until after the resurrection proves that this is not a question about His so-called "second coming" because at this point, (Matt 24:1-3) before His

death and resurrection, the disciples did not even believe that Jesus was going to die; therefore, they certainly did not believe that He was going to be resurrected and ascend to heaven and "come again" when that question recorded in Matthew 24:3 was put to Jesus before His death.

If this question is not about the so-called "second coming," then **what in the world is it about?** I submit to you that it is referring to the prophecies about Jesus given in the Old Testament as recorded in Matthew:

"And when he ^(Herod) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:4-6 NKJV)"

Most Bible students know that this is a reference to the prophecy about Jesus which is found in Micah 5:2, but few seem to notice that Micah does not say anything about a "Shepherd" thus this passage is about more than the prophecy in Micah 5:2. In Micah 2:12, Micah does write about the "flock" of "Israel," but again here nothing is said about a "Shepherd," so were in the Old Testament do we find a prophecy about a "shepherd"?

The most specific prophecies about this "Shepherd" are found in Jeremiah 31:10 and Ez 34:12:

"Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him ^(Israel), And keep him ^(Israel) as a shepherd *does* his flock.' (Jeremiah 31:10 NKJV)

"David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. (Ezekiel 37:24 NKJV)"

Thus we see that Matthew 2:9 is not only a reference to Micah 5:2, but it is also a specific reference to prophecies in Jeremiah and Ezekiel and a non-specific reference to prophecies in 2Sam 7:7ff and many others in the OT about Jesus. It was these prophecies that the disciples were expecting to be fulfilled not prophecies about a so-called "second coming" that they did not know anything about at the time that they put that question to Jesus in Matthew 24:3.

The prophecy given to Mary about Jesus, before the conception: as recorded in Luke 1:31-33, puts the disciples question in Matt 24:3 into its proper perspective:

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David**. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33 NKJV)"

This prophecy in Luke is a direct reference back to the prophecy given from God to King David by Nathan the prophet in 2Sam 7:**10**-24, cf. 1Chron 17:14 and many others such as Amos 9:15 in the Old Testament:

"Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, "since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. "He shall build a house for My name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**. "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. "But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. **Your throne** shall be established forever.""" According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. (2 Samuel 7:10-17 NKJV)"

All of the prophecies referred to above were about the restoration of the "kingdom to Israel" under the "Shepherd King." These prophecies then, *not some nonexistent prophecies about a so-called "second coming,"* are the ones which the disciples had in their minds when they came to Jesus that fateful time on the Mount of Olives.

In Matthew 24:3 the disciples clearly connected Jesus prophecy about the destruction of "the buildings of the temple" with the "end of the age" and the "Parousia" of Jesus. In first century Greek/Roman society the word "parousia" was used to describe the "arrival and continued presence" of a person in any new location. It was also used to designate the arrival and continued presence of the king in a given location.

The very last question which the disciples asked Jesus just before His ascension into heaven sheds a great deal of light on this subject:

"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, **will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**" (Acts 1:6 NKJV)"

The above question was also put to Jesus on the Mount of Olives. This question descends in a direct line from the OT prophecies discussed above, through the statements about those prophecies in Matthew 2:9 and Luke 1:31-33 to the question in Acts 1:6. Thus, the disciples were properly expecting the fulfillment of these prophecies, *not some nonexistent prophecies about the so-called "second coming to earth"*.

With this in mind and with a more appropriate understanding of the "Parousia" now let's return to 1Thess 4:15-17:

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we, who are alive, remaining until the Parousia of the Lord, will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, remaining shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Paul's reference to "**the Parousia of the Lord**" is a direct parallel with his statement to the Corinthians and several other passages in the NT:

"But each one (resurrected) in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward **those who are Christ's in His Parousia**. (1 Corinthians 15:23 NKJV)"

According to the NT, it was a little less than forty years from the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the "firstfruits" until the "Parousia" of Jesus Christ when the harvest occurred. Remember the questions which the disciples asked Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24:3:

"...**what shall be the sign of your parousia?**"

The answer for this question which Jesus gave those disciples is recorded in Matthew 24:27-31:

"For as the lightening¹ (of the sun) comes from the east and shines to the west, so also will the **Parousia of the Son of Man** be... "For wherever the carcass (of Jerusalem) is, there the eagles (the Roman armies) will be gathered together. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven², and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "Then **the sign** (of the Parousia) of the Son of Man in heaven (on the throne of David) will appear..." (Matthew 24:27-30a)"

In this passage Jesus told the disciples that the "sign of His Parousia" would be the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem which He had prophesied in Matt 23-24:2.

There is one more very important facet of this statement in Matthew 24:27 that we should look at now. Once again this passage has been grossly misunderstood because of the way that it is has been translated into English in the AV (KJV), etc. The proper translation of this verse has been provided above:

"For as the lightening (of the sun) comes from the east and shines to the west, so also will the **Parousia of the Son of Man** be... "

Jesus reference to His Parousia here is not about a flash of lightning as per the KJV etc. Lightning does not "shine from the east to the west" as Jesus stated. However, the "lightening" of the morning sun does in fact shine from the east to the west just exactly as Jesus stated. Properly understood "the Parousia of Jesus Christ and His resurrected saints is identical to "the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ with His resurrected saints" in Revelation 20:4:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then / saw the souls/lives of those who had been *beheaded* (killed) for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *the mark* on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived** (were resurrected) and reigned with Christ for a thousands years. (Revelation 20:4 NKJV)"

The Parousia (arrival and continued presence of Jesus on the throne of David) has been accomplished just exactly like Jesus said that it would. It

¹ For a detailed study of this word, please read the short paper entitled "lightening or Lightning" on my website: www.lloydlae.com

² In keeping with the apocalyptic nature of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus here uses their apocalyptic language to describe the fall of a nation. In this case, it apocalyptically refers to the fall of house of Judah and their capital city, Jerusalem and their temple.

began as a glimmer of light from "the day star" (2Peter 1:19) in the east and during the past 1936 years it has literally shined "from the east to the west." As Peter wrote in reference to the Parousia of Jesus:

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed, as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning/day star rises in your hearts; (2 Peter 1:19 NKJV)"

Jesus Christ, the day star, has been rising in the hearts of men, women and children from the east (Judea) to the west ever since it began at the resurrection in ca. 70 AD.

In Summary:

In the first century ca. 70 AD, just as the apostle Paul promised the Corinthians, Thessalonians, and all other first century Christians:

"The Lord Himself descended from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ were resurrected first. Then all first century Christians who were alive, remaining on earth at the Parousia were caught up together, with those who had just been resurrected, in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And since that time, they have been with the Lord"

Because of that wonderful and marvelous first century beginning of the Parousial resurrection (1Cor 15:23b), (today each believer who dies in the Lord Jesus Christ Rev 14:13) is also, at death, immediately resurrected into "His heavenly kingdom" (2Tim 4:18) to join Jesus, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Matt 8:11), Peter, Paul, and all the others who have gone on before us. PTL!