

Response to the AMERICAN VISION Article

“Are We Living in the Last Days...?”

By **Brandon Vallorani**

I cannot find the words that express my intense disappointment with your article referenced above.

You were doing just great until you wrote:

“If the Bible is the infallible word of God, which it is, can this many passages get the timing of Christ’s return wrong?” (My emphasis)

The first mistake:

Please go back and re-read the 19 verses you quoted in your article – where do you find the word “return” in any of those verses? It is simply not there.

The shift from “coming” to “return” is extremely subtle, but is of incredible importance in a proper understanding of the NT teaching about the imminent “coming” of Jesus Christ. You wrote, “Let’s be honest with the text,” to which I absolutely agree. But when you use the word “return”, I am not sure that you are being “honest with the text”.

Bible students, such as yourself, seem to automatically assume that the many references to the first century imminent “coming” of Jesus Christ are references to His “return” to earth. That is a false assumption that has no Biblical warrant.

In the list of 19 verses you quoted in your article there are 6 references to the first century imminent “coming” of Jesus Christ:

"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel [before the Son of Man comes](#) ([ἐρχομαι erchomai](#)). (Matthew 10:23 NKJV)

"For [the Son of Man will come](#) in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see [the Son of Man coming](#) ([ἐρχομαι erchomai](#)) in His kingdom." (Matthew 16:27-28 NKJV)

"For yet a little while, *And He who is coming (ἐρχομαι erchomai) will come (heko) and will not tarry.* (Hebrews 10:37 NKJV)

Therefore be patient, brethren, until *the coming (Parousia) of the Lord.* See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, *for the coming (Parousia) of the Lord is at hand.* Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7-9 NKJV)

Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His messenger (Jesus Christ) to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. "*Behold, I am coming (ἐρχομαι erchomai) quickly!* Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:6-7)

I respectfully suggest to you that not a single one of these references speak to a Jesus Christ "return" to earth. In order to establish a true meaning for the imminent "coming" of Jesus Christ as set forth in the NT, we must find a reference outside of the "coming" verses that tell us what His "coming" was to be. The only OT prophecies about Him that Jesus did not fulfill prior to AD 70 are the many OT prophecies succinctly summarized in Luke 1:32-33:

"(Jesus) 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 1:32-33 NKJV)

Now note that this passage clearly states that the forever reign of Jesus Christ will begin when God, the Father gives Jesus the throne of David. During His ministry on earth Jesus repeatedly referred to the "throne of David" as "the throne of His glory" (Matt 19:28, 25:34; cf. Rev 3:21). ***With the above facts in mind, we now see that the imminent "coming" which the first century disciples were expecting was Jesus "coming" to the throne of David, i.e. the throne of His glory.*** This is the only event that the "coming" passages in the NT are referring to, i.e. **Jesus "coming" to the throne of His glory (the throne of David).**

As we look again at Matthew 16:27-28, we note that Jesus stated that He "will come in the glory of His Father..." which is a clear reference to His Parousia. Many passages in Scripture establish that God was going to give Jesus the throne of David in the Parousia of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:32-33). Matthew continued, "... with His messengers (not angels, but saints, see the discussion of 1Thessalonians below) **and then He will REWARD each man (messenger) according to his works.**

Here we should note that Matthew 16 was preceded by Matthew 5:8-12:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for **they shall see God** (in heaven). Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (in the resurrection into heaven). Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven** (note this kingdom is in heaven, not on earth). "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, **for great is your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:8-12, comments and emphasis added)

As Matthew clearly demonstrates, the disciples who heard Jesus' statements in Matt 16:27-28 were well aware of Jesus' statements as recorded in Matthew 5. They would have understood His statements as recorded in Matt 16 in the light of Matt 5, cf. Luke 1:32-33. Most modern Bible students fail to do that.

The truth and accuracy of the above analysis is demonstrated by the very last question these disciples ask Jesus just before He ascended to heaven:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (they understood that the restoration would occur by His "coming" to the throne of David)?" (Acts 1:6)

Here the disciples clearly understood that Jesus would not, indeed could not, "come" to the throne of David until the kingdom was restored to Israel.

Additional verification for the above is found in Matthew 24:3:

Now 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 Parousia, and of the end of the age?**" (Matthew 24:3)

In this question, the disciples demonstrated a clear link between the Parousia of Jesus Christ and the end of the age. The age that was soon to end in the first century was the age of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant as both the OT and the NT clearly demonstrate that this "old" covenant would be replaced with a "new" covenant (Jer 31:31ff; Heb 8:8ff; et al.) which was introduced by the blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

That you are certainly aware of this is demonstrated by your statement:

Let's be honest with the text. Matthew 24:34, for example, requires that the great tribulation occur before the current generation (about 40 years) passed away. Add approximately 40 years to A.D. 33, and you'll find yourself in the midst of one of the most horrific events in history: the crucifixion of millions of Jews, the destruction of the Temple, and the burning of the Holy City of Jerusalem. The entire Old Covenant system collapsed at that time. Not a single sacrifice has been offered by the Jewish people since that time. Most people fail to realize that this was perhaps the most significant event in prophetic history.

Now let us return to Acts 1 and its confabulation passage Matt 24:14:

And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father sets in His own authority. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. ...And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the civilized world (Roman Empire) for a witness unto all nations and then **the end shall come." (Acts 1:7-8 & Matt 24:14, my emphasis)**

As we think about this passage we must keep in mind the fact that Jesus is responding to the disciples' question, "**Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**" Therefore, "**the times and seasons**" to which Jesus refers here can only be "**the times and the seasons**" for the "**restoration of the kingdom to Israel**". Nothing more and nothing less!

We should also notice here that Jesus clearly states that only God the Father – not Jesus – has the power to "**restore the kingdom to Israel again**".

After referring to God, the Father's power, Jesus turns His attention to the "**power**" that the disciples will soon "**receive**". In context, it should certainly be understood here that this "**power**" that the disciples are about to "**receive**" is essential for the "**restoration of the kingdom to Israel**"!

Jesus clearly instructs the disciples that they will "**receive power to be His witnesses...to the remotest parts of the earth**" (i.e. the Roman Empire and surrounds)" for the "**restoration of the kingdom to Israel**".

The confabulation of these Matthew passages clearly demonstrates that at least four great events would all occur at the same time to bring about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel:

- The “coming” of Jesus Christ to the throne of His glory, i.e. the throne of David
- The Parousia of Jesus Christ
- The end of the age
- The restoration of the Kingdom to Israel in the new age in heaven

Then turning to 1Cor 15:23, we learn that the resurrection of “all who belong to Christ” occurs “in His Parousia”. This event is also foretold in 1Thess 4:14-17 and in Revelation 20:4, et al. Thus, we see that the kingdom is restored to Israel through resurrection just as prophesied in Ezekiel 37:1-15.

In examining these events in this manner we learn that resurrection of those who belong to Christ (1Cor 15:23c) is an event that **must occur** with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in the first century and *is not an event that occurs at the end of the church age what ever someone may think that is*. How can an age that is forever/eternal have an end?

As we continue, let us now look at the verses from James which you quoted:

Therefore be patient, brethren, until [the coming \(Parousia\) of the Lord](#). See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, [for the coming \(Parousia\) of the Lord is at hand](#). Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7-9 NKJV, according to most modern Christians, the judge has now been idly standing at the door for nearly two thousand years.)

Can you possibly imagine that James is here telling the first century saints to be patient until the destruction of Jerusalem – an event which you refer to as “one of the most horrific events in history”? Or perhaps you can imagine that James is instructing these first century saints to wait for “The entire Old Covenant system (to) collapse...”? How could either of these things be referred to as the harvest of “the precious fruit of the earth”?

It should not need to be explained that the harvest of “the precious fruit of the earth” is the resurrection of the saints that belong to Jesus Christ “in His Parousia” as described in 1Cor 15:23c, 51-54; 1Thess 4:14-17; Rev, 20:4 et

al. The “hope of Israel” was the resurrection restoration of the Kingdom to Israel in the first century, *not some time in the distant future*.

For **the grace of God** that brings salvation **has appeared to all men**, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly **in the present age** (i.e. the last days of the Mosaic Marriage age that the apostle were living in), **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself His own special people**, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14 NKJV)

Here Paul states that “**the grace of God... has appeared to all men... in the present age**” it should be understood without explanation that “**the present age**” of which Paul writes is the “last days” (Heb 1:2, cf. Acts 2:17; 2Tim 3:1; James 5:3; 2Pet 3:3) of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant “**Age**” which you have stated ended in AD 70 with “the destruction of the temple”, etc. Paul also wrote that “**the grace of God brings salvation**”. However, this salvation had not yet arrived as Peter wrote:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy begets us again **to a resurrection hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory **in the revelation of Jesus Christ**, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, **receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your lives**. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which messengers desire to look into. Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope (for resurrection) fully upon **the grace that is to be brought to you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ**; (1 Peter 1:3-13, emphasis and comments added)

In this passage Peter explains to the first century Christians of the Assyrian Exile/Diaspora a number of things which we need to examine very carefully. These things are:

- God begets the first century Christians to a resurrection hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- This resurrection hope is an inheritance which is:
 1. incorruptible (cf. 1Cor 15:51-54)
 2. undefileable (undefiled, cf. 1Tim 6:14; 2Peter 3:14; 2Cor 11:2)
 3. unfadeable (not fading away)
 4. kept (reserved) in heaven awaiting their arrival there through resurrection
- The first century Christians are kept by the power of God:
 1. through faith
 2. unto salvation (i.e. received through resurrection)
 3. “**ready to be revealed** (by resurrection) in the last time...in the Revelation of Jesus Christ”
- These first century saints would **receive** the end of their faith which was **the salvation of their lives** through resurrection out of (from) the dead in “last days” in which those disciples were living. This salvation through resurrection would be revealed in the “last hour” (1John 1:18) as the Mosaic Marriage “world passed away (1John 1:17) at the destruction of the temple.

Thu, we now see, that James was instructing the first century saints of the 12 tribes of Israel scattered abroad by the Assyrian Captivity/Exile/Diaspora that they should wait patiently for the resurrection in the Parousia of Jesus Christ (1Cor 15:23c). The apostles, including Paul, preached this hope of resurrection as an imminent expectation for themselves and the other first century saints:

...they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (Acts 4:2b; cf. Acts 17:18, 32; 23:6; 24:15)

"I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that **there is about to be** (imminent) a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust. (Acts 24:15, 21; 1Cor 15)

The second mistake:

Brandon wrote:

If the great tribulation was a past event, what about the return of Christ?

In Matthew 24:30, Jesus states:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the kindreds of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Most Christians believe this is referring to the Second Coming of Christ. But is it? Jesus is actually quoting directly from Daniel 7:13-14, which reads:

As I beheld in visions by night, behold, one like the son of man came in the clouds of heaven, and approached unto the Ancient of days, and they brought him (Jesus) before him (the Ancient of Days). And he (the Ancient of Days) gave him (Jesus) dominion, and honor, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him (Jesus): his (Jesus) dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall never be taken away: and his (Jesus) dominion shall never be destroyed. Comments mine, LD)

Clearly, this passage teaches that Jesus is going up in the clouds of heaven and **NOT** coming down to earth. He is going to God the Father, who will give Him an everlasting Kingdom. This event must have happened before A.D. 70, because Jesus said that the entire Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled before this generation passed away. It is true that Christ will one day return to earth bodily (1 Thess. 4:16) and defeat his final enemy, which is death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). Until then, he is reigning in heaven on the throne of His Father (sic) David (Acts 2:33-36 and Heb. 1).

There are several problems in the above. First, we will list the problems, and then discuss each one of them:

1. There is that word “**return**” again. The Bible does not teach a “return” to earth of Jesus Christ. (discussed above)
2. Then there is the phrase “the Second Coming of Christ”. The Bible does not teach “the Second Coming of Christ” to planet earth. (The above discussion about the “return” also applies to the imaginary “second coming” of Christ)
3. “This event must have happened before A.D. 70”
4. “Christ will one day return to earth bodily (1 Thess. 4:16) and defeat his final enemy, which is death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).”
5. “Until then, he is reigning in heaven on the throne of His Father (sic) David (Acts 2:33-36 and Heb. 1).”

#5 is thoroughly covered in my paper “Sitting in the throne of His Glory” so I will not go into it again here in this paper.

Because the “return” or “second coming of Christ” has been thoroughly refuted above, we will proceed with #3.

The salient portion of Matthew 24:30 states:

...the Son of man in heaven: ...and they shall see the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Brandon is correct that this is not a reference to some imaginary “second coming of Jesus Christ” to planet earth. And it is true that Daniel 7:14 is the focus of Jesus’ comment here. However, Brandon errors in his statement that “This event must have happened before A.D. 70, because Jesus said that the entire Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled before this generation passed away.”

It is clear from the context of Matthew 24, especially verse 30 that the event described in Matt 24:30 did not happen “before AD 70. Daniel 7:14 and Matthew 24:30, as Brandon states, are both describing the “Parousia” of Jesus Christ (see the discussion of the Parousia and related events above).

However, Jesus did not say “that the entire Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled before this generation passed away.” Jesus actually said that “this generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.” While these statements may,

on the surface, seem very similar, I think that there is a subtle difference - a subtle, but important difference.

The Olivet discourse begins with the questions:

1. When shall these things (all the things described by Jesus in chapter 23) be?
2. What is the sign of your Parousia?
3. and when is the end of the age?

The first question, of course, refers, among other things, to the destruction of the “temple building” Jesus referenced in verse 2.

The second question was about a “sign” that would signify the Parousia of Jesus Christ and the end of the age. One “sign” would signify both events the Parousia of Jesus Christ and the end of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant age. According to Jesus that one “sign” that would signify that the Parousia and the end of the age was to occur “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (v 29a) and that “sign” would be the destruction of Jerusalem (v 29b- 30a; [see also Luke 21:28-33 & 22:15-30](#)) Thus, when the destruction of Jerusalem occurred the saints were to “lift up there heads for their [redemption was drawing very near](#)” (Luke 21:28) [and their redemption would come with their resurrection into the kingdom of heaven](#) (Luke 21:31) or as Paul said of Jesus Christ, “His heavenly kingdom” (2Tim 4:18).

This redemption by resurrection of the saints and their arrival in the kingdom would both occur at the same time because Jesus was going to “send His messengers with the great sound of a trumpet to gather the elect” and “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the first messenger and with the last trump of God and the dead in Christ shall arise” (confabulation of Matt 24:31 & 1Thess 4:16).

Also, it is at this time that the “rewards” of which Jesus spoke in Matt 16:27-28 and parallels in the other Gospels will be acquired by the followers of Jesus Christ:

"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for **you shall be rewarded in the resurrection of the just.**" (Luke 14:14, emphasis added)

Now as for the speculation that "Christ will one day return to earth bodily..." First of all, what is meant by "...return to earth bodily"? Certainly there is nothing in 1Thess 4:14-17 that says anything about a "bodily" return to planet earth.

Second, if Christ were to "return bodily" what kind of body would He have? He certainly would not have the same body that the disciples witnessed after the resurrection of Jesus. If it were, then the author of the fourth Gospel becomes a fool by stating:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but **we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him**, for **we shall see Him as He is**. (1 John 3:2 NKJV)

Here the inspired author makes it clear that the Jesus that is to be "revealed" in the resurrection in His Parousia does not look (is not like) the resurrected Jesus. Something has changed between the ascension of Jesus and the "revealing" of Jesus; otherwise the inspired author would have simply written "it has been revealed by the resurrection of Jesus what we shall be like in our resurrection." But the inspired author did not write that. Instead he wrote, "it has not yet been revealed what we shall be," but "we shall be like Him when we see Him" in the resurrection.

When did the inspired author think that Jesus would be "revealed" if not in the Parousia of Jesus of 1Thess 4:14-17? But notice that the inspired author did not say anything about this happening as a "return to planet earth."

Third, there is the matter of jerking 1Thess 4:14-17 out of its first century context and moving it "at least 34,000 years" into the future.

Where is the Biblical warrant for such a move?

Paul reminds the first century Thessalonian Christians, "You have turned to God...and to wait for His Son...Jesus." **It would have been really stupid for these Thessalonians to be waiting for Jesus if His Parousia was not to occur for at least 36,000 years.** To make matters even worse, Paul is the

one who taught them to “wait for Jesus” – *what does that say about the “inspiration” of Paul?*

Additionally, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “walk worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory...for you are our glory and joy...before our Lord Jesus Christ in His Parousia”. If this “Parousia” was not going to occur for at least 36,000 years, why would Paul even teach these Thessalonians about it?

Paul continues writing to the Thessalonians, “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love...to the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, in the Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

Paul continues, “...we which are **alive** and **remain** unto the Parousia of the Lord...” In context this “we” must surely mean Paul and the Thessalonians, not some Christians ca. 36,000 years later. If Paul was discussing an event that was not going to take place for at least 36,000 years he would have surely said “they who are alive...”, but Paul did not do that – he wrote “we” clearly meaning the first century Thessalonians and himself.

Finally, in chapter 5 Paul cements the imminency of the Parousia of Jesus Christ by writing that the Thessalonians knew “the times and the seasons” and were “not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are the children of Light and the children of the day...” “Therefore...let us watch...for *God has not appointed us to wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here Paul clearly indicates that the appointed “Salvation” which was “reserved in heaven” (1Peter 1:4) awaiting the arrival in heaven of those “being saved by hope” (Rom 8:24) which would follow *soon after* the appointed “wrath” (see also Luke 21 and 22). If the Parousia of Jesus Christ, which included the “resurrection to salvation” (1Cor 15) of Paul, the Thessalonians, and other first century Christians *did not occur in the first century as Paul clearly indicated that it would; then surely, Paul was one of the greatest fools of all time – certainly not a writer of Inspired Scripture.*

Brandon also wrote:

“...and defeat his final enemy, which is death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)”

As 1Corinthians 15:25-26 clearly parallels 1Thessalonians 4:14-17, many of the arguments above related to 1Thessalonians also apply here, especially those about timing. Even more important are verses 51-52 which also clearly parallel 1Thessalonians 4:14-17 and provide a second witness.

Contrary to Brandon's theory, it is not necessary for Jesus to "return" to planet earth in order to defeat death. **Death is defeated by resurrection out of death**, not by a "return" to earth. ***Therefore, death will be totally defeated by "the resurrection of the rest of the dead" (Rev 20:5a, & 12-13) that occurs just before the great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15).***

While I agree with Brandon that Jesus "is reigning in heaven on the throne of His Father (sic) David"¹ there is absolutely nothing in Acts 2:33-36 nor in Hebrews 1 that would establish that it could be possible for Jesus to be "reigning in heaven" apart from "His Parousia". If Brandon is correct that Jesus is now in heaven "reigning" from the throne of David, then he must also accept the fact that "His Parousia" has in fact also taken place – as it is absolutely impossible for Jesus to be reigning "from the throne of David" if He has not arrived (His Parousia) on that throne, "the throne of His glory".

As has been extensively documented above, Jesus would not arrive in the kingdom on the throne of David prior to the resurrection of those who belong to Jesus "in His Parousia" (1Cor 15:23c; cf. 1Thess 4:14-17).

There is one more point that should be established before we leave this paper.

In 1Corinthians 15:23c Paul states that the resurrection of "those who belong to Christ" will occur "in the Parousia" of Jesus Christ.

Now notice what Paul stated in 1Thessalonians 3:13:

¹ Note that neither Brandon nor I said that "Jesus is reigning from the right hand of God the Father's throne." Neither Brandon nor I subscribe to this very common but sadly mistaken notion. Jesus does not rule from the right hand of God's the Father's throne any more than Solomon could reign from the right hand of David's throne. When the proper time for Solomon to reign came, he was given a throne of his own. So it was with Jesus, He ascended to sit at the right hand of the God the Father (Heb 1:3, 13; et al.) and to wait until God gave Him the throne of His Glory. Thus, Jesus sat at the right hand of God the Father and when the time came for Him to reign; God the Father gave Him His own throne, His own kingdom and His own people within the kingdom. (Rev 3:21; Psalm 110:1; Heb 10:13; Luke 22:29-30; et al.):

“Now may our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father in the Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ **with all His saints.**”
(1Th 3:11-13)

In 1Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul is describing in more detail how the Parousia of Jesus and His saints will occur.

Please take a very careful look at the passage shown below and remember as you do so that Paul is writing about the Parousia of Jesus:

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep (have died in Jesus), 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 (Jesus) those who sleep in Jesus.”
(1Th 4:13-14)

Most Christians, especially Dispensationalists although it is true of some preterists also, teach that this verse means that when Jesus comes down from heaven for His Parousial² resurrection and harpado that those who “sleep in Jesus” will come down with Him. That understanding simply cannot be true because Jesus clearly stated that:

“No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven--the Son of Man.” (Joh 3:13)

Nothing had changed between the time when Jesus made this statement and when Paul wrote 1Thessalonians so no one was in heaven when Paul wrote these words. If there was no one in heaven prior to the Parousia of Jesus and His saints (see above), then God could not bring any one with Jesus when He “descended with a shout...” So what is this verse actually saying?

It is saying that that God will bring those who “sleep in Jesus” with those who are living and remaining with Jesus in His Parousia. As Paul describes in more detail just a few verse later:

² See also 1Corinthians 15:23c, 51-53 and the Fourth Gospel 13:1; 14:1-3; 17:24 for a better understanding.

““For the Lord (Jesus) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise (in resurrection) first:**”

These “dead in Christ” resurrected here are the ones who “sleep in Jesus” in verse 14 above that “God is going to bring with Jesus” into the heavenly kingdom as the result of the resurrection and harpazo described herein.)

Then we who are living *and* remaining shall be caught up (harpazo) together with them (the saints who had just been resurrected) in the clouds **to meet** the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (in His heavenly kingdom, 2Timothy 4:18).” (1Th 4:17)

The Greek word translated “to meet” in the verse above is “ἀπάντησις” which, using English letters is “apantesis” pronounced “ap-an’-tay-sis.” The Greeks often used this word to describe a meeting with the king when he came to visit a city. The citizens of the city would go out “to meet” (apantesis) the king and escort him into the city. Essentially the same thing is happening here: The King Jesus has come, the people of the heavenly Jerusalem³; first the resurrected ones then the living and remaining ones go out to meet the newly arrived King in the air. Then, Jesus the King is escorted by the citizens (saints) of the kingdom and they all enter the heavenly city together.

While I agree with Brandon that “the kingdom of God is growing” – I simply cannot agree with him that “we’ve only just begun” nor can I agree that the “darkest hour of human history is over” as the darkest hour in human history will occur in the Gog and Magog worldwide war against Christians followed by the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:7-15.

³ For a better understanding of this see Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-14, 16; 12:22 and then compare with Galatians 4:26, 28.

