



## THE DIVINE RESOLUTION VII:

# Parousias

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. —  
Matthew 27:50.

What actually happened at this critical moment on the cross of Calvary? Was this event simply the execution of a rebellious Jew condemned by the rulership for committing blasphemy and treason? Was it the substitutionary death of the second Adam for sins committed by the first Adam and his offspring, as claimed by traditional Christianity? Was it the liberation of a righteous God from his imprisonment in a fallen human body, as Gnostic Christianity contends? No, it was none of these! Rather, the death of Jesus Christ was the *inaugural* death of the old, self-existent deity. It was the *inaugural* death of the old, commanding, possessive and power-dominated covenant. And it was the *inaugural* death of the old Creation, fraught with disaster, disease and death itself.

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Then what occurred at the resurrection? The resurrection was the *inauguration* of the new God, co-existent with all “others.” It was the resurrection of the new, relational covenant of reciprocal, self-emptying [*kenotic*] love. And it was the *inauguration* of the new, transformed Creation with its infinite positive potential. It is essential to emphasize the *inaugural* nature of Christ’s death and resurrection. He died and he rose as the Representative and Corporate Person, who stood for, with and on behalf of all “others”.<sup>1</sup> He was the ultimate Pattern and Archetype. No surrogate power structures, no contrived substitutes, no sacraments, liturgies or other intermediaries can ever add to or subtract from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If these assumptions are valid, why have not the manifestation and consummation of the co-existent God, of the relational covenant, and of the new Creation actually occurred? The answer lies in the meaning and significance of the Greek word *parousia*, which, translated, means both “presence” and “coming.” The term *parousia* was used throughout the Hellenistic and Roman eras with three connotations:

1. *Parousia* referred to the royal invasion and overthrow of a rebellious people determined to oppose, reject and supplant the emperor’s realm.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the *parousaic* invasion of Jesus Christ triumphantly occurred at Calvary.

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On Calvary Jesus bore the inevitable burden of self-existence, of command and possession, of dominating power structures, and of death — all of which he himself had instituted, employed or permitted. Calvary was thus the apocalyptic Battle of Armageddon (*Har-Moed* = Mount of Assembly).<sup>3</sup> All divinized power structures and self-deified individuals, determined and capable of annihilating the created order, were there victoriously encountered and dethroned. These pseudo-corporate ones just do not yet know this!

2. *Parousia* was used for the official presence of an emissary or an emperor.<sup>4</sup> In Jewish thinking the king was the people’s representative and corporate person, who was always *with* them and who spoke *to* them and *for* them. In this sense, at his resurrection Jesus Christ began his *parousaic* “presence” — not as transcendence or as immanence but as relational presence — for he declared, “. . . [L]o, I am *with* you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20, italics supplied).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, he said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5; cf. Joshua 1:5).

3. *Parousia* was applied to the ultimate relational acknowledgement, acclamation and enthronement of the king by his people.<sup>6</sup> To understand this aspect of the *parousia*, one can transpose the passage in 1 John 3:2 as follows: “. . . [When] we shall see him as he is . . . he shall appear . . .” As soon as a representative group of human beings recognizes the Risen One as the unique Corporate and Archetypal Person who inaugurated the New God, the New Covenant and the New Creation — apart from all imagined surrogates — then the *parousaic* transformation of all Creation will occur. Then God will be enthroned — and “we shall be like him.”<sup>7</sup>

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. . . [B]ehold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. — Revelation 22:12.

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## Endnotes

1. “. . . [T]hat the Messiah Yeshua stands for and is intimately identified with his people Israel [and the world] is an extremely important corporate aspect of the Gospel generally neglected in the individualistically oriented Western world” (David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* [Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996], p. 12).
2. “The prince, writing to Leonippius the Praefect of Caria, makes twofold mention of his own parusia, i.e. his invasion of the province of Asia” (Adolf Deissmann, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan, *Light from the Ancient East* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978], p. 370).
3. See “The Divine Resolution V: Creation and Apocalyptic,” *Outlook* (November/December 2005).
4. “In its ancient context *parousia* meant the arrival at a city of a conquering general, an important official, an imperial emissary, or, above all, the emperor himself” (John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’s Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004], p.167).
5. This assertion of Jesus Christ, “I am with you alway . . . ,” is the epic fulfillment of the promise made to Moses at the burning bush, when he declared himself to be “*Ehyeh asher ehyeh*” (I will be/become/effect with you). See “The Name of God,” at [www.bluethread.com/ehyeh.htm](http://www.bluethread.com/ehyeh.htm): “Martin Buber muses that ‘Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh’ has a special meaning because of what happens almost immediately before and after it appears in the Torah. He notes that God makes a promise before revealing his name: ‘But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?” And He said, I will be with you . . . ’ (Exodus 3:11-12) and repeats it soon afterward:  
And the Lord said to him,  
‘Who gives man speech?  
Who makes him dumb or deaf,  
seeing or blind?  
Is it not I, the Lord?  
Now go, and I will be with you . . . ’  
(Exodus 4:11-12)”
6. “Matthew 24.3, therefore, is most naturally read, in its first-century Jewish context . . . as a question about Jesus ‘coming’ or ‘arriving’ in the sense of his actual enthronement as king, consequent upon the dethronement of the present powers . . .” (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996], p. 346).
7. In ancient Israel the number 10 expressed “completeness and perfection. . . Its sacred character . . . may derive from the fact that it is the product of three and seven (both sacred numbers) . . .” It also was a representative number — i.e., the Decalogue, the tithes, the “ten patriarchs from Adam to Noah . . . and ten from Noah to Abraham . . .” Also, it was the “minimum number of righteous men required to save Sodom.” And Sodom was a metaphor for the evil world at the eschaton. “. . . [T]he same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17:29, 30). See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Israel Abrahams, “Numbers, Typical and Important.”