

An examination of the Greek words parousia (coming) and apantesis (meet) as in 1 Thess 4:15-17.

1 Thess. 4:15-17 tell us that at the coming of the Lord believers will be raptured to meet Him in the air. The following examines the meaning of the words translated as 'coming' and 'meet'.

Parousia (G3952) is translated 'coming' in 1 Thess. 4:15 and has the following meaning:
Physical presence, arrival - The main use is the physical presence of a person. Where that person is not already present refers to the prospect of the physical arrival of that person, especially the visit of a royal or official personage.

Apantesis (G529) is translated 'meet' in 1 Thess. 4:17. It is a technical term that refers specifically to the practice of sending a delegation outside the city walls and gates to receive a dignitary who was coming. This was the practice when a king and his army were returning from war. All the people would pour forth from the city gates and welcome them with pomp and circumstance. The people would meet them outside and then usher them back into the city with shouts of joy and acclamation.

Regarding apantesis, W.E. Vines says "It is used in the papyri of a newly arriving magistrate. It seems that the special idea of the word was the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary". I would like to look at every instance this word is used in scripture (which is only 3 places):

- 1) Matt. 25:1 *"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom"*.
- 2) Matt. 25:6 *"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"*.
- 3) Matt. 25:10 *"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut"*.

We can note three things about this word "meet" (apantesis)

- a) - The bridegroom is going to the marriage feast.
- b) - The virgins go out to meet him.
- c) - They continue on to the marriage feast, the original destination.

The bridegroom certainly does not fetch them from where they are waiting and whisk them off to some far away location. Rather, while the foolish virgins are away buying more oil, the bridegroom comes and enters into the marriage feast with the five wise virgins. The foolish virgins return to their original location to find the door already shut.

Acts 28:15-16 *"And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him"*.

Again, we note three things:

- 1 - Paul is traveling toward the city of Rome.
- 2 - The brethren meet him.
- 3 - Paul and the brethren continue on into Rome, the original destination.

1 Thess. 4:16-17 *"For the Lord himself 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 first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"*.

This does not say anything about the Lord returning, then reversing direction and heading back to Heaven.

1 Thess. 4:17 says “*And so shall we ever be with the Lord*”. We can’t follow Christ back to Heaven and “*ever be with the Lord*” when He isn’t going to be there forever. He’s setting up His kingdom here on earth!

When the dignitary approached a city, the elders of the city would go out to meet him and escort him back into the city. In no case does the one being met reverse direction and return the way he came. On the contrary, it is the people meeting the dignitary who change direction.

Once again, we note three things:

- 1 - The Lord descends from heaven [toward Earth].
- 2 - After the dead rise first, we who are alive go to meet him in the air.
- 3 - We accompany the Lord back to Earth, which he was originally approaching

Based upon this (among other things I’ve already mentioned in the book), I am persuaded to believe that the return of Christ and the rapture of the church take place simultaneously.

W E Vines

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