

# Dr. David Mathewson, Where is His Coming? Session 1, Problem of the Parousia and Possible Solutions Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Mathewson, Where is His Coming? Session 1, Problem of the Parousia and Possible Solutions, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. Dave Mathewson's teaching, "Where Is His Coming? Session 1," explores the theological challenge posed by the apparent delay of Christ's second coming (parousia) as seemingly predicted in the New Testament. The lecture acknowledges that biblical texts suggest Jesus' return was imminent, even within the lifetime of his followers, yet this has not occurred. **Mathewson highlights how this perceived delay has led to crises of faith and examines various interpretations attempting to reconcile these scriptural expectations with historical reality.** He critiques views ranging from failed prophecy to dispensationalism and the idea of conditional prophecy. **Ultimately, Mathewson proposes to explore a balanced understanding of imminency and delay within the New Testament.** He assumes the traditional authorship of biblical books and clarifies his use of terms like parousia, rejecting a distinction between the rapture and the second coming. **The session begins by analyzing Jesus' pronouncements about the nearness of the Kingdom of God, suggesting it was inaugurated with his first coming but awaits its full realization.**

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Mathewson, Where is His Coming? Session 1 – Double  
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Theology → Where is His Coming).**



**Mathewson\_When\_  
Session01.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, Where is His Coming?**

#### **Session 1, Problem of the Parousia and Possible Solutions**

##### **Briefing Document: The Problem of the Delayed Parousia in the New Testament**

##### **Executive Summary:**

Dr. Dave Mathewson's first session on "Where Is His Coming?" introduces the significant theological problem of the apparent delay of Jesus Christ's second coming (parousia) as predicted in the New Testament. Mathewson highlights numerous scriptural passages where Jesus and his apostles seem to anticipate an imminent return, even within their own lifetimes. This discrepancy between the promised immediacy and the subsequent two millennia of waiting has created a "crisis of faith" for some. The session outlines several traditional approaches to address this issue, including dismissing scripture as mistaken, ignoring the problem, the "failed prophecy" view, the AD 70 fulfillment view, classical dispensationalism, and the conditional prophecy view. Mathewson concludes by suggesting that a more balanced explanation is needed, one that acknowledges both the New Testament emphasis on imminency and the reality of delay, rooted in the concept that the "end times" were inaugurated with Christ's first coming.

##### **Main Themes and Important Ideas:**

##### **1. The Problem of the Delayed Parousia:**

- The New Testament, particularly the Gospels, contains statements from Jesus suggesting his return and the arrival of the Kingdom of God were near, even within the lifetime of his contemporaries. Examples include:
- Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17, Luke 4:43: Jesus proclaiming, "The time has come... the kingdom of God is near."
- Mark 9:1, Matthew 16:28, Luke 9:27: Jesus stating, "some of you standing here will not die before you see the kingdom of God coming in power and glory."
- Mark 13:30, Matthew 24:34, Luke 21:32: Jesus saying, "this generation will not pass away until all these things happen" (referring to events associated with his return).
- Apostolic writings also express a sense of imminence:
- 1 Corinthians 7:29: Paul stating, "the time is short."

- 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: Paul's use of "we" suggesting he might be alive at Christ's return.
- James 5:7: James urging patience because "the coming of the Lord is near."
- 1 Peter 4:7: Peter declaring, "the end of all things is near."
- Revelation 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10, 20: John recording that certain events are "near" and Jesus saying, "I am coming soon."
- The non-fulfillment of these seemingly immediate prophecies has led to skepticism and a "crisis of faith" for some: "Certainly, if Jesus got it wrong on this, and the New Testament authors were wrong on something like this, we really can't trust much of the rest of what they say."
- Mathewson emphasizes that this problem originates within the New Testament texts themselves: "The New Testament authors themselves seem to create this problem of an end that hasn't come."

#### 1. **Unsuccessful Attempts to Resolve the Issue:**

- **Ignoring the Problem:** Many Christians are unaware or choose to disregard the tension between the promised imminence and the historical delay.
- **Failed Prophecy View:** This view, associated with scholars like Albert Schweitzer and Bart Ehrman, suggests that Jesus was simply mistaken in his apocalyptic predictions, akin to modern-day failed prophecies. This view denies Jesus' divinity and the authority of Scripture: "Under this view, the failed prophecy view, Jesus is simply an apocalyptic type preacher just preaching the end, thought that the end would come in his lifetime, but he was wrong and ended up hanging on the cross and being put to death for it."
- **AD 70 View:** This perspective argues that many of the "coming soon" passages, particularly in the Gospels, refer to Jesus' coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in AD 70. While acknowledging the imminence, it reframes the "coming" as a specific historical event rather than the final parousia. N.T. Wright is mentioned as a prominent advocate.
- **Classical Dispensational View:** This view distinguishes between God's dealings with Israel and the Church, suggesting Jesus offered a literal earthly kingdom to Israel in the first century, which was postponed due to their rejection. The "near" prophecies in the Gospels pertained to this offer. Later New Testament texts regarding imminence are often linked to the "rapture" of the Church, a separate

event preceding the future re-establishment of the kingdom for Israel. This view faces challenges in explaining the apparent immediacy of the rapture for the first-century believers.

- **Conditional Prophecy View:** This view proposes that the predictions of Christ's near return were conditional upon the response of the audience (repentance and belief). Since widespread repentance did not occur, the coming was delayed, and continues to be delayed until sufficient response is achieved. 2 Peter 3, which speaks of God's patience allowing for repentance, is cited as support. "Basically, the book was arguing that the New Testament authors and Jesus did predict the soon return of Christ in their lifetime. But that prediction was conditioned upon the response of the audience."

#### 1. Mathewson's Proposed Approach:

- Mathewson suggests a balanced explanation that accounts for both the imminency and the delay found in the New Testament.
- He highlights "hints within the New Testament that Christ's coming might be delayed for a while."
- He argues that the emphasis on the soon return of Christ in the New Testament was primarily for **motivation for holy living and sanctification**, not for precise prophetic dating: "I think, without exception, the New Testament, from the gospels to the book of Revelation, the New Testament emphasis on imminency, or the soon return of Christ, is always in the context of motivation for holy living."
- A key concept is that the **"end times" were inaugurated with Christ's first coming, death, and resurrection**. New Testament authors believed they were already living in this final period, awaiting its "final consummation" at the parousia: "That the first coming of Christ, the end-time kingdom, promised and predicted by the Old Testament prophets, had already been inaugurated with the first coming of Christ."
- Therefore, the New Testament authors were not "anticipating the end" in the sense of it being entirely future, but rather "awaiting its wrap-up."

#### 1. Assumptions and Terminology:

- Mathewson assumes the traditional authorship of the New Testament books.
- He uses "parousia," "coming of Christ," and "second coming" synonymously to refer to Christ's future return at the end of history for judgment and salvation.

- He does not distinguish between a rapture and the second coming, viewing them as the same event.

### 1. **The Kingdom of God:**

- Mathewson clarifies that the Kingdom of God is not primarily a location or a period of time, but rather **God's sovereign rule and kingly power**.
- This concept has its roots in the Old Testament prophecies of God reigning over creation through the Messiah, restoring Israel, and establishing a new covenant.
- Mathewson aligns with George Eldon Ladd's "already and not yet" framework to understand Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom was near. The Kingdom was **already inaugurated** in a partial form through Christ's first coming, ministry, death, and resurrection, allowing people to enter it and experience its blessings. The "not yet" refers to the future arrival of the Kingdom in its fullness at Christ's second coming.
- Examples like Jesus casting out demons by the Spirit are cited as evidence of the Kingdom of God already breaking into the present age: "if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, the kingdom of God has come upon you."

### **Next Steps (as indicated in the source):**

- The following lectures will delve into specific Gospel passages that seem to predict Christ's return within the disciples' lifetimes (e.g., Mark 9:1, Matthew 16:28, Luke 9:27; Mark 13:30, Matthew 24:34, Luke 21:32).
- Mathewson will offer explanations for these texts that reconcile them with the reliability of Scripture and the character of God and Jesus.

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Mathewson's first session effectively frames the complex issue of the delayed parousia, highlighting its significance for biblical interpretation and Christian faith. By outlining various traditional approaches and proposing a framework centered on the inaugurated "end times" and the motivational purpose of imminency language, he sets the stage for a deeper examination of specific New Testament texts in subsequent sessions. The session underscores the importance of grappling with these challenging passages to maintain confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture and the promises of Christ.

## 4. Study Guide: Mathewson, Where is His Coming? Session 1, Problem of the Parousia and Possible Solutions

### Study Guide: The Delay of the Parousia in the New Testament

#### Key Concepts Covered:

- **Parousia:** The second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of history.
- **Delay of the Parousia:** The apparent contradiction between New Testament expectations of Jesus' imminent return and the fact that it has not yet occurred nearly 2000 years later.
- **Imminency:** The New Testament emphasis on the nearness and soonness of Christ's return.
- **Crisis of Faith:** The doubt and skepticism that arises when the predicted "soon" return of Christ has not materialized.
- **Failed Prophecy View:** The interpretation that Jesus and the New Testament authors were simply wrong in their predictions of an imminent return.
- **AD 70 View:** The interpretation that many of the "soon coming" prophecies referred to Jesus' judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.
- **Classical Dispensational View:** A theological system that distinguishes between God's dealings with Israel and the Church and posits a delayed offer of the earthly kingdom to Israel, with the current church age preceding a future rapture and subsequent second coming.
- **Conditional Prophecy View:** The interpretation that the predicted soon return of Christ was conditional upon the response (repentance and belief) of the audience, and its delay is due to a lack of sufficient response.
- **Already and Not Yet:** A theological framework for understanding the kingdom of God as having been inaugurated with Christ's first coming (the "already") but not yet fully consummated (the "not yet").
- **Inauguration of the Kingdom:** The beginning of God's reign on earth through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- **Consummation of the Kingdom:** The future, full manifestation of God's reign at the parousia.

- **Motivation for Holy Living:** The idea that the New Testament emphasis on the imminency of Christ's return serves as an incentive for believers to live righteous and godly lives.
- **Living in the End Times:** The New Testament perspective that, with Christ's first coming, the "last days" predicted by the Old Testament have already begun.
- **Synonymous Terminology:** The interchangeable use of terms like "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" to refer to the same reality.
- **Authorship Assumptions:** The study's assumption of the traditional authorship of the New Testament books.
- **Parousia Terminology:** The study's synonymous use of "parousia," "coming of Christ," and "second coming" to refer to Christ's end-time return.
- **Rapture and Second Coming:** The study's assumption that the rapture and the second coming of Christ are the same event.

#### Short-Answer Quiz:

1. What is the central problem addressed in Dr. Mathewson's lecture regarding the parousia?
2. According to the lecture, what is a significant consequence of the perceived delay of Christ's return for some individuals?
3. Describe the "failed prophecy view" and name at least one scholar associated with it, as mentioned in the lecture.
4. Explain the core argument of the "AD 70 view" in relation to the New Testament prophecies of Christ's coming.
5. Briefly outline how the "classical dispensational view" attempts to resolve the issue of the delayed parousia, mentioning its key distinctions.
6. What is the main premise of the "conditional prophecy view" regarding the timing of Christ's return?
7. Explain the theological concept of the "already and not yet" in the context of the kingdom of God.
8. According to the lecture, what was the primary purpose of the New Testament emphasis on the imminency of Christ's return?

9. What does it mean, according to the lecture, that the New Testament authors believed they were already living in the end times?
10. What are the assumed relationships between "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven," and between the "rapture" and the "second coming" in this lecture?

**Answer Key:**

1. The central problem is the apparent contradiction between the New Testament's frequent statements suggesting Jesus would return soon, possibly within the lifetime of his followers, and the historical reality that nearly 2000 years have passed without this having occurred.
2. The perceived delay of Christ's return has led to a crisis of faith for many, causing some to question the reliability of Scripture, the trustworthiness of Jesus' teachings, and even to abandon their faith altogether due to the unfulfilled prophecies.
3. The "failed prophecy view" suggests that Jesus and the New Testament authors were simply mistaken in their predictions about the timing of the end. Albert Schweitzer and Bart Ehrman are mentioned as scholars who held a version of this view, seeing Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher who incorrectly predicted the world's end.
4. The "AD 70 view" argues that many of the New Testament prophecies about Jesus' "soon" coming were not referring to his second coming at the end of history but rather to his coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 AD.
5. The "classical dispensational view" posits that Jesus truly offered the promised Old Testament kingdom to Israel in his lifetime, but Israel rejected it. This led to a delay of the kingdom and the institution of the church age. A future rapture of the church will precede a renewed offer of the kingdom to Israel and the eventual second coming.
6. The "conditional prophecy view" proposes that the predicted soon return of Christ in the first century was a genuine offer but was conditional upon the audience's response of repentance and belief. The delay is attributed to the lack of sufficient positive response.
7. The "already and not yet" framework explains that the kingdom of God was inaugurated with Jesus' first coming, ministry, death, and resurrection (the



"already"), meaning God's reign has begun. However, it has not yet reached its full and final realization, which will occur at Christ's second coming (the "not yet").

8. According to the lecture, the primary purpose of the New Testament emphasis on the imminency of Christ's return was not to predict the end or set dates, but rather to serve as a motivation for holy living, sanctification, and a positive response in the lives of believers.
9. The lecture states that the New Testament authors believed that with the first coming of Christ, the end times predicted by the Old Testament prophets had already begun. They were not waiting for the end to arrive but were living in the inaugurated "end," awaiting its final consummation at the parousia.
10. The lecture indicates that "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are used synonymously to refer to God's sovereign rule. Furthermore, it assumes that the rapture described in 1 Thessalonians 4 and the second coming of Christ are the same event, a single coming at the end of history.

## Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the various interpretations presented in the lecture regarding the delay of the parousia. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of at least three of these views in light of the New Testament texts mentioned.
2. Explain the significance of the "already and not yet" concept for understanding the New Testament's statements about the nearness of the kingdom of God. How does this framework address the tension of the delayed parousia?
3. Critically evaluate the claim that the New Testament emphasis on the imminency of Christ's return primarily served as a motivation for holy living rather than a prediction of a specific timeline. Support your argument with examples from the lecture.
4. Explore the implications of the belief that the New Testament authors considered themselves to be living in the end times. How does this perspective shape their understanding of Jesus' first coming and their anticipation of his second coming?
5. Considering the various solutions discussed in the lecture, what approach do you find most compelling for reconciling the New Testament's expectation of Christ's soon return with the subsequent historical reality of its delay? Justify your choice by referencing specific arguments and concepts from the source material.

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Eschatology:** The theological study of end times, including death, judgment, and the final destiny of humanity and the world.
- **Parousia:** A Greek word commonly used in the New Testament to refer to the second coming or future presence of Jesus Christ.
- **Imminent:** Likely to occur at any moment; impending. In eschatology, it refers to the expectation that Christ's return is near and could happen soon.
- **Apocalyptic:** Relating to or resembling the biblical Book of Revelation or other texts that describe the end times in symbolic and often dramatic language.
- **Prophecy:** A divine communication or revelation, often concerning future events.
- **Dispensationalism:** A theological system that divides biblical history into distinct periods or "dispensations" in which God administers his plan in different ways.
- **Rapture:** A theological term, primarily from dispensationalism, referring to the belief that Christians will be caught up in the air to meet Jesus Christ before a period of tribulation on earth.
- **Sovereignty (of God):** The belief that God is the ultimate authority and has absolute power and control over all things.
- **Inaugurate:** To formally begin or introduce something new. In theology, it refers to the beginning of the kingdom of God through Christ's first coming.
- **Consummation:** The completion or fulfillment of something. In eschatology, it refers to the final realization of God's kingdom at Christ's return.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God's purposes.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective and content in their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Olivet Discourse:** A major teaching section of Jesus found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, in which he discusses the destruction of the temple and the signs of his future return.
- **New Covenant:** The new relationship between God and humanity established through Jesus Christ, replacing the Old Covenant established with Israel.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Where is His Coming? Session 1, Problem of the Parousia and Possible Solutions, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: The Delay of Christ's Return

#### 1. What is the central problem addressed regarding the "coming" of Jesus in the New Testament?

The core issue is the apparent delay of the *parousia*, or second coming of Jesus Christ. The New Testament, particularly the Gospels, contains statements from Jesus and his followers that suggest his return and the establishment of God's kingdom were imminent, possibly within their own lifetimes. However, nearly 2000 years have passed, and this anticipated return has not yet occurred, leading to questions about the reliability of these biblical predictions and the faith of believers.

#### 2. What are some of the New Testament passages that create this expectation of an imminent return?

Several passages contribute to this expectation. In the Gospels, Jesus states that "the kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15) and that some of his listeners "will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God coming in power" (Mark 9:1). In his eschatological discourse, Jesus also says, "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Mark 13:30). Outside the Gospels, Paul writes that "the time is short" (1 Corinthians 7:29) and includes himself among those "who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). James urges patience because "the coming of the Lord is near" (James 5:7), and Peter declares that "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). Finally, the book of Revelation repeatedly states that certain events are "near" and that Jesus is "coming soon" (Revelation 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10, 20).

#### 3. How has the apparent delay of Christ's return affected some people's faith?

The discrepancy between the promised imminence of Christ's return in the New Testament and the reality of its continued absence has created a "crisis of faith" for many. If Jesus and the New Testament authors were mistaken about such a significant event, some question the reliability of the rest of their teachings and the trustworthiness of Scripture as a whole. This has led some to skepticism, questioning, and even abandonment of their Christian faith.

#### **4. What is the "failed prophecy view" as an explanation for the delay?**

The "failed prophecy view" suggests that Jesus and the apostles were simply wrong in their predictions of an imminent return. Proponents like Albert Schweitzer and Bart Ehrman argue that Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher who mistakenly believed the end of the world would occur during his ministry or the lifetime of his followers. This view sees these predictions as failed and denies the divine nature of Jesus and the inspiration of Scripture.

#### **5. How does the "AD 70 view" interpret the passages about Christ's near return?**

The "AD 70 view" proposes that many of the New Testament passages about Jesus' imminent coming refer not to his second coming at the end of history, but to his coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 AD. This view takes the language of "near" and "soon" literally, arguing that Jesus' "coming" in judgment on Jerusalem did indeed occur within the lifetime of his first-century audience. N. T. Wright is a well-known advocate of this perspective.

#### **6. What is the "classical dispensational view" and how does it address the issue of delay?**

Classical dispensationalism posits that God works through distinct periods or dispensations in history. This view suggests that Jesus did offer the promised Old Testament kingdom to Israel during his first coming, expecting it to be established soon. However, due to Israel's rejection, the kingdom was postponed, and the present "church age" was inaugurated. The passages about the near return in the Gospels refer to this initial offer, while other passages about the "short time" and believers being "caught up" refer to a future rapture of the church before God re-offers the kingdom to Israel and the second coming occurs. This view distinguishes between two future comings of Christ: a rapture for the church and a second coming for Israel.

#### **7. What is the "conditional prophecy view" regarding the delay of Christ's coming?**

The "conditional prophecy view" suggests that the predictions of Jesus' imminent return were genuine offers and prophecies for the first century, but their fulfillment was conditional upon the response of the audience. According to this view, the delay occurred because not enough people repented and believed. The ongoing delay provides further opportunities for repentance and belief before Christ finally returns. This perspective often emphasizes 2 Peter 3:9, which suggests God's patience is intended to allow more people to come to repentance.

**8. What is Dr. Mathewson's proposed explanation for reconciling the imminence and the delay of Christ's return?**

Dr. Mathewson proposes an explanation that balances the New Testament teaching on imminence with the reality of delay. He suggests that the New Testament emphasis on the soon return of Christ was primarily to motivate holy living and not to predict the exact timing of the end. Furthermore, he highlights the concept of the "already and the not yet" regarding the kingdom of God. Jesus' first coming inaugurated the end times and brought the kingdom in a partial, initial form ("already"). The New Testament authors believed they were already living in this inaugurated end. The "not yet" refers to the future, full consummation of the kingdom at Christ's second coming. Dr. Mathewson also assumes a single future coming of Christ, encompassing both the "rapture" and the "second coming," rejecting a sharp distinction between the two.